COLLECTION

OF

BRITISH AUTHORS.

VOL. CCXXXII.

THE DALTONS OR THREE ROADS IN LIFE

BY

CHARLES LEVER.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

THE DALTONS

OR

THREE ROADS IN LIFE.

BY

CHARLES LEVER.

COPYRIGHT EDITION.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LEIPZIG

BERNH. TAUCHNITZ JUN.

1852.

CONTENTS

OF VOLUME I.

			Page
CHAPTER	I.	Baden out of Season	1
—	II.	An Humble Interior	14
—	III.	"The Forest Road."	30
—	IV.	The Onslows	52
—	V.	The Patient	63
—	VI.	A First Visit	74
—	VII.	A Lesson in Pistol Shooting	85
—	VIII.	The Night Excursion	95
—	IX.	A Fine Lady's Blandishments	107
—	X.	A Family Discussion	117
—	XI.	"A Peep between the Shutters," at a new Character	131
—	XII.	Mr. Albert Jekyl	145
—	XIII.	A Suspicious Visitor	156
—	XIV.	An Embarrassing Question	164
—	XV.	Contrasts.	186
—	XVI.	The "Saal" of "The Russie."	212
—	XVII.	A Family Discussion	218

			Page
CHAPTER	XVIII.	Cares and Crosses	238
—	XIX.	The Preparation for the Road	246
—	XX.	A very small "Interior"	273
—	XXI.	A Family Picture.	283
—	XXII.	Kate	300
—	XXIII.	A Small Supper Party	314

THE DALTONS;

OR,

THREE ROADS IN LIFE.

VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.

Baden out of Season.

A THEATRE by daylight — a great historical picture in the process of cleaning — a ballet-dancer of a wet-day hastening to rehearsal — the favourite for the Oaks dead-lame in a straw-yard — are scarcely more stripped of their legitimate illusions than is a fashionable watering-place on the approach of winter. The gay shops and stalls of flaunting wares, are closed; the promenades, lately kept in trimmest order, are weed-grown and neglected; the "sear and yellow leaves" are fluttering and rustling along the alleys where "Beauty's step was wont to tread." Both music and fountains have ceased to play; the very statues are putting on great overcoats of snow, while the orange-trees file off like a sad funeral procession to hide themselves in dusky sheds till the coming spring.

You see as you look around you that nature has been as unreal as art itself; and that all the bright hues of foliage and flower — all the odours that floated from bed and parterre — all the rippling flow of stream and fountain, have been just as artistically devised, and as much "got up," as the transparencies, or the Tyrolese singers, the fireworks, or the fancy fair, or any other of those ingenious "spectacles" which amuse the grown children of fashion. The few who yet linger seem to have undergone a strange transmutation. The smiling landlord of the "Adler" — we refer particularly to Germany as the very land of watering-places — is a half-sulky, farmer-looking personage, busily engaged in storing up his Indian corn, and his firewood and his forage, against the season of snows. The bland "Croupier," on whose impassive countenance no shade of fortune was able to mark even a passing emotion, is now seen higgling with a peasant for a sack of charcoal, in all the eagerness of avarice. The trim maiden, whose golden locks and soft blue eyes made the bouquets she sold seem fairer to look on, is a stout wench, whose uncouth fur cap and wooden shoes are the very antidotes to romance. All the transformations take the same sad colours. It is a pantomime read backwards.

Such was Baden-Baden in the November of 182—. Some weeks of bad and broken weather had scattered and dispersed all the gay company. The hotels and assembly-rooms were closed for the winter. The ball-room, which so lately was alight with a thousand tapers, was now barricaded like a gaol. The very post-office, around which each morning an eager and pressing crowd used to gather, was shut up — one

small aperture alone remaining as if to show to what a fraction all correspondence had been reduced. The Hôtel de Russie was the only house open in the little town; but although the door lay ajar, no busy throng of waiters, no lamps, invited the traveller to believe a hospitable reception might await him within. A very brief glance inside would soon have dispelled any such illusion had it ever existed. The wide staircase, formerly lined with orange-trees and camellias, was stripped of all its bright foliage; the marble statues were removed; the great thermometer, whose crystal decorations had arrested many a passing look, was now encased within a wooden box, as if its tell-tale face might reveal unpleasant truths, if left exposed.

The spacious "Saal," where some eighty guests assembled every day, was denuded of all its furniture, mirrors and lustres; bronzes and pictures were gone, and nothing remained but a huge earthenware stove, within whose grating a faded nosegay — left there in summer — defied all speculations as to a fire.

In this comfortless chamber three persons now paraded with that quick step and brisk motion that bespeak a walk for warmth and exercise; for dismal as it was within doors, it was still preferable to the scene without, where a cold incessant rain was falling, that, on the hills around, took the form of snow. The last lingerers at a watering-place, like those who cling on to a wreck, have usually something peculiarly sad in their aspect. Unable, as it were, to brave the waves like strong swimmers, they hold on to the last with some vague hope of escape, and like a shipwrecked crew, drawing closer to each other in adversity than in more prosperous times, they condescend now to ac-

quaintance and even intimacy, where, before, a mere nod of recognition was alone interchanged. Such were the three who now, buttoned up to the chin, and with hands deeply thrust into side pockets, paced backwards and forwards, sometimes exchanging a few words, but in that broken and discursive fashion that showed that no tie of mutual taste or companionship had bound them together.

The youngest of the party was a small and very slightly made man of about five or six-and-twenty, whose face, voice, and figure were almost feminine, and, only for a very slight line of black moustache, might have warranted the suspicion of a disguise. His lacquered boots and spotless yellow gloves appeared somewhat out of season, as well as the very light textured coat which he wore; but Mr. Albert Jekyl had been accidentally detained at Baden, waiting for that cruel remittance which — whether the sin be that of agent or relative — is ever so slow of coming. That he bore the inconvenience admirably (and without the slightest show of impatience) it is but fair to confess, and whatever chagrin, either the detention, the bad weather, or the solitude may have occasioned, no vestige of discontent appeared upon features where a look of practised courtesy, and a most bland smile, gave the predominant expression. "Who he was," or, in other words, whence he came — of what family — with what fortune, pursuits, or expectations, we are not ashamed to confess our utter ignorance, seeing that it was shared by all those that tarried that season at Baden, with whom, however, he lived on terms of easy and familiar intercourse.

The next to him was a bilious looking man, some-

what past the middle of life, with that hard and severe cast of features that rather repels than invites intimacy. In figure he was compactly and stoutly built, his step as he walked and his air as he stood showed one whose military training had given the whole tone to his character. Certain strong lines about the mouth, and a peculiar puckering of the angles of the eyes, boded a turn for sarcasm, which all his instincts, and they were Scotch ones, could not completely repress. His voice was loud, sharp, and ringing; the voice of a man who, when he said a thing, would not brook being asked to repeat it. That Colonel Haggerstone knew how to be sapling as well as oak, was a tradition among those who had served with him; still it is right to add, that his more congenial mood was the imperative, and that which he usually practised. The accidental lameness of one of his horses had detained him some weeks at Baden, a durance which assuredly appeared to push his temper to its very last entrenchments.

The third representative of forlorn humanity was a very tall, muscular man, whose jockey-cut green coat and wide-brimmed hat, contrasted oddly with a pair of huge white moustaches, that would have done credit to a captain of the old guard. On features, originally handsome, time, poverty, and dissipation, had left many a mark; but still the half droll, half truculent twinkle of his clear grey eyes, showed him one whom no turn of fortune could thoroughly subdue, and who, even in the very hardest of his trials, could find heart to indulge his humour — for Peter Dalton was an Irishman; and although many years an absentee, held the dear island and its prejudices as green in

his memory as though he had left it but a week before.

Such were the three — who, without one sympathy in common, without a point of contact in character — were now drawn into a chance acquaintance by the mere accident of bad weather. Their conversation — if such it could be called — showed how little progress could be made in intimacy by those whose roads in life lie apart. The by-gone season, the company, the play-table and its adventures, were all discussed so often, that nothing remained but the weather. That topic, so inexhaustible to Englishmen, however, offered little variety now, for it had been uniformly bad for some weeks past.

"Where do you purpose to pass the winter, Sir?" said Haggerstone to Jekyl, after a somewhat lengthy lamentation over the probable condition of all the Alpine passes.

"I 've scarcely thought of it yet," simpered out the other, with his habitual smile. "There 's no saying where one ought to pitch his tent 'till the Carnival opens."

"And you, Sir?" asked Haggerstone of his companion on the other side.

"Upon my honour, I don't know then," said Dalton; "but I wouldn't wonder if I stayed here or hereabouts."

"Here! — why, this is Tobolsk, Sir! — you surely couldn't mean to pass a winter here?"

"I once knew a man who did it," interposed Jekyl, blandly. "They cleaned him out at 'the tables;' and so he had nothing for it but to remain. He made rather a good thing of it, too; for it seems these

worthy people, however conversant with the great arts of ruin, had never seen the royal game of thimble-rig; and Frank Mathews walked into them all, and contrived to keep himself in beet-root and boiled beef by his little talents."

"Wasn't that the fellow who was broke at Kilmagund?" croaked Haggerstone.

"Something happened to him in India; I never well knew what," simpered Jekyl. "Some said he had caught the cholera; others, that he had got into the Company's service."

"By way of a mishap, Sir, I suppose," said the Colonel, tartly.

"He wouldn't have minded it, in the least. For certain," resumed the other coolly, "he was a sharp-witted fellow; always ready to take the tone of any society."

The Colonel's cheek grew yellower, and his eyes sparkled with an angrier lustre; but he made no rejoinder.

"That's the place to make a fortune, I'm told," said Dalton. "I hear there's not the like of it all the world over."

"Or to spend one," added Haggerstone, curtly.

"Well, and why not?" replied Dalton. "I'm sure it's as pleasant as saving — barring a man's a Scotchman."

"And if he should be, Sir? — and if he were one that now stands before you?" said Haggerstone, drawing himself proudly up, and looking the other sternly in the face.

"No offence — no offence in life. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. Sure, a man can't help where he's going to be born."

"I fancy we'd all have booked ourselves for a cradle in Buckingham Palace," interposed Jekyl, "if the matter were optional."

"Faith! I don't think so," broke in Dalton. "Give me back Corrig-O'Neal, as my Grandfather Pearce had it, with the whole Barony of Kilmurray-O'Mahon, two packs of hounds, and the first cellar in the county, and to the devil I'd fling all the royal residences ever I seen."

"The sentiment is scarcely a loyal one, Sir," said Haggerstone, "and as one wearing his Majesty's cloth, I beg to take the liberty of reminding you of it."

"Maybe it isn't; — and what then?" said Dalton, over whose good-natured countenance a passing cloud of displeasure lowered.

"Simply, Sir, that it shouldn't be uttered in *my* presence," said Haggerstone.

"Phew!" said Dalton, with a long whistle. "Is that what you're at? See, now —" Here he turned fully round, so as to face the Colonel — "see, now; I'm the dullest fellow in the world at what is called 'taking a thing up;' but make it clear for me — let me only see what is pleasing to the company, and it isn't Peter Dalton will baulk your fancy."

"May I venture to remark," said Jekyl, blandly, "that you are both in error, and however I may (the cold of the season being considered) envy your warmth, it is after all only so much caloric needlessly expended."

"I wasn't choleric at all," broke in Dalton, mistaking the word, and thus happily, by the hearty laugh his blunder created, bringing the silly altercation to an end.

"Well," said Haggerstone, "since we are all so perfectly agreed in our sentiments, we couldn't do better than dine together, and have a bumper to the King's health."

"I always dine at two, or half past," simpered Jekyl: "besides, I'm on a regimen, and never drink wine."

"There's nobody likes a bit of conviviality better than myself," said Dalton; "but I've a kind of engagement — a promise I made this morning."

There was an evident confusion in the way these words were uttered, which did not escape either of the others, who exchanged the most significant glances as he spoke.

"What have we here?" cried Jekyl, as he sprang to the window and looked out. "A courier by all that's muddy? Who could have expected such an apparition at this time?"

"What can bring people here now?" said Haggerstone, as with his glass to his eye he surveyed the little well-fed figure, who, in his tawdry jacket all slashed with gold, and heavy jack-boots, was closely locked in the embraces of the landlord.

Jekyl at once issued forth to learn the news, and, although not fully three minutes absent, returned to his companions with a full account of the expected arrivals.

"It's that rich banker, Sir Stafford Onslow, with his family. They were on their way to Italy, and

made a mess of it somehow in the Black Forest — they got swept away by a torrent, or crushed by an avalanche, or something of the kind, and Sir Stafford was seized with the gout, and so they 've put back, glad even to make such a port as Baden."

"If it 's the gout 's the matter with him," said Dalton, "I 've the finest receipt in the world. Take a pint of spirits — poteen if you can get it — beat up two eggs and a pat of butter in it; throw in a clove of garlic and a few scrapings of horse-radish, let it simmer over the fire for a minute or two, stir it with a sprig of rosemary to give it a flavour, and then drink it off."

"Gracious Heaven! what a dose!" exclaimed Jekyl, in horror.

"Well, then, I never knew it fail. My father took it for forty years, and there wasn't a haler man in the country. If it wasn't that he gave up the horse-radish, for he didn't like the taste of it, he 'd, maybe, be alive at this hour."

"The cure was rather slow of operation," said Haggerstone, with a sneer.

"'T was only the more like all remedies for Irish grievances, then," observed Dalton, and his face grew a shade graver as he spoke.

"Who was it this Onslow married?" said the Colonel, turning to Jekyl.

"One of the Headworths, I think,"

"Ah, to be sure; Lady Hester. She was a handsome woman when I saw her first, but she fell off sadly, and indeed, if she had not, she 'd scarcely have condescended to an alliance with a man in trade, even though he were Sir Gilbert Stafford."

"Sir Gilbert Stafford!" repeated Dalton.

"Yes, Sir; and now Sir Gifford Stafford Onslow. He took the name from that estate in Warwickshire. Skepton Park, I believe they call it."

"By my conscience, I wish that was the only thing he took," ejaculated Dalton, with a degree of fervour that astonished the others, "for he took an elegant estate that belonged by right to my wife. Maybe you have heard tell of Corrig-O'Neal?"

Haggerstone shook his head, while with his elbow he nudged his companion, to intimate his total disbelief in the whole narrative.

"Surely you must have heard of the murder of Arthur Godfrey, of Corrig-O'Neal; wasn't the whole world ringing with it?"

Another negative sign answered this appeal.

"Well, well, that beats all ever I heard! but so it is, sorrow bit they care in England if we all murdered each other! Arthur Godfrey, as I was saying, was my wife's brother — there were just the two of them, Arthur and Jane — she was my wife."

"Ah! here they come!" exclaimed Jekyl, not sorry for the event which so opportunely interrupted Dalton's unpromising history. And now a heavy travelling carriage, loaded with imperials and beset with boxes, was dragged up to the door by six smoking horses. The courier and the landlord were immediately in attendance, and after a brief delay the steps were lowered, and a short, stout man, with a very red face, and a very yellow wig, descended, and assisted a lady to alight. She was a tall woman, whose figure and carriage were characterized by an air of fashion. After her came a younger lady, and lastly — moving with

great difficulty, and showing by his worn looks and enfeebled frame the suffering he had endured — came a very thin, mild-looking man of about sixty. Leaning upon the arm of the courier at one side, and of his stout companion, whom he called Doctor, at the other, he slowly followed the ladies into the house. They had scarcely disappeared, when a calèche, drawn by three horses at a sharp gallop, drew up, and a young fellow sprang out, whose easy gestures and active movements showed that all the enjoyments of wealth, and all the blandishments of fashion, had not undermined the elastic vigour of body which young Englishmen owe to the practice of field sports.

"This place quite deserted, I suppose," cried he, addressing the landlord. "No one here?"

"No one, Sir. All gone," was the reply.

Haggerstone's head shook with a movement of impatience as he heard this remark, disparaging, as it was, to his own importance; but he said nothing, and resumed his walk as before.

"Our Irish friend is gone away, I perceive," said Jekyl, as he looked around in vain for Dalton. "Do you believe all that story of the estate he told us?"

"Not a syllable of it, Sir. I never yet met an Irishman — and it has been my lot to know some scores of them — who had not been cheated out of a magnificent property, and was not related to half the Peerage to boot. Now, I take it, that our highly-connected friend is rather out at elbows!" And he laughed his own peculiar hard laugh, as though the mere fancy of another man's poverty was something inconceivably pleasant and amusing.

"Dinner, Sir," said the waiter, entering, and addressing the Colonel.

"Glad of it," cried he; "it's the only way to kill time in this cursed place;" and so saying, and without the ceremony of a good-bye to his companion, the Colonel bustled out of the room with a step intended to represent extreme youth and activity. "That gentleman dines at two?" asked he of the waiter, as he followed him up the stairs.

"He has not dined at all, Sir, for some days back," said the waiter. "A cup of coffee in the morning and a biscuit are all that he takes."

The Colonel made an expressive gesture by turning out the lining of his pocket.

"Yes, Sir," replied the other, significantly; "very much that way, I believe." And with that he uncovered the soup, and the Colonel arranged his napkin and prepared to dine.

CHAPTER II.

An Humble Interior.

When Dalton parted from his companions at the "Russie," it was to proceed by many an intricate and narrow passage to a remote part of the upper town, where close to the garden wall of the Ducal palace stood, and still stands, a little solitary two-storied house, framed in wood, and the partitions displaying some very faded traces of fresco painting. Here was the well-known shop of a toy-maker; and although now closely barred and shuttered, in summer many a gay and merry troop of children devoured with eager eyes the treasures of Hans Roëckle.

Entering a dark and narrow passage beside the shop, Dalton ascended the little creaking stairs which led to the second story. The landing-place was covered with fire-wood, great branches of newly-hewn beech and oak, in the midst of which stood a youth, hatchet in hand, busily engaged in chopping and splitting the heavy masses around him. The flush of exercise upon his cheek suited well the character of a figure which, clothed only in shirt and trousers, presented a perfect picture of youthful strength and symmetry.

"Tired, Frank?" asked the old man, as he came up.

"Tired, father! not a bit of it. I ony wish I had as much more to split for you, since the winter will be a cold one."

"Come in and sit down, boy, now," said the father, with a slight tremor as he spoke. "We cannot have many more opportunities of talking together. To-morrow is the twenty-eighth of November."

"Yes; and I must be in Vienna by the fourth, so uncle Stephen writes."

"You must not call him uncle, Frank, he forbids it himself; besides, he is my uncle, and not yours. My father and he were brothers, but never saw each other after fifteen years of age, when the Count — that's what we always called him — entered the Austrian service, so that we are all strangers to each other."

"His letter doesn't show any lively desire for a closer intimacy," said the boy, laughing. "A droll composition it is, spelling, and all."

"He left Ireland when he was a child, and lucky he was to do so," sighed Dalton, heavily; "I wish I had done the same."

The chamber into which they entered was, although scrupulously clean and neat, marked by every sign of poverty. The furniture was scanty and of the humblest kind. The table linen such as used by the peasantry, while the great jug of water that stood on the board seemed the very climax of narrow fortune in a land where the very poorest are wine drinkers.

A small knapsack with a light travelling cap on it, and a staff beside it, seemed to attract Dalton's eyes as he sat down. "It is but a poor equipment, that yonder, Frank," said he at last, with a forced smile.

"The easier carried," replied the lad, gaily.

"Very true," sighed the other. "You must make the journey on foot."

"And why not, father? Of what use all this good blood, of which I have been told so often and so much, if it will not enable a man to compete with the low-born peasant. And see how well this knapsack sits," cried he, as he threw it on his shoulder. "I doubt if the Emperor's pack will be as pleasant to carry."

"So long as you haven't to carry a heavy heart, boy," said Dalton, with deep emotion, "I believe no load is too much!"

"If it were not for leaving you and the girls, I never could be happier, never more full of hope, father. Why should not *I* win my way upward as Count Stephen has done? Loyalty and courage are not the birthright of only one of our name!"

"Bad luck was all the birthright ever I inherited," said the old man, passionately; "bad luck in everything I touched through life! Where others grew rich, I became a beggar; where *they* found happiness, I met misery and ruin! But it's not of this I ought to be thinking now," cried he, changing his tone. "Let us see, where are the girls?" And so saying, he entered a little kitchen which adjoined the room, and where, engaged in the task of preparing the dinner, was a girl, who though several years older, bore a striking resemblance to the boy. Over features that must once have been the very type of buoyant gaiety, years of sorrow and suffering had left their deep traces, and the dark circles around the eyes betrayed how deeply she had known affliction. Ellen Dalton's figure was faulty for want of height in proportion to her size, but had another and more grievous defect in a lameness, which made her walk with the greatest

difficulty. This was the consequence of an accident when riding, a horse having fallen upon her and fractured the hip-bone. It was said, too, that she had been engaged to be married at the time, but that her lover, shocked by the disfigurement, had broken off the match, and thus made this calamity the sorrow of a life long.

"Where's Kate?" said the father, as he cast a glance around the chamber.

Ellen drew near, and whispered a few words in his ear.

"Not in this dreadful weather; surely, Ellen, you didn't let her go out in such a night as this."

"Hush!" murmured she, "Frank will hear you; and remember, father, it is his last night with us."

"Couldn't old Andy have found the place?" asked Dalton; and, as he spoke, he turned his eyes to a corner of the kitchen, where a little old man sat in a straw chair peeling turnips, while he croned a ditty to himself in a low sing-song tone; his thin wizened features, browned by years and smoke, his small scratch wig, and the remains of an old scarlet hunting-coat that he wore, giving him the strongest resemblance to one of the monkeys one sees in a street exhibition.

"Poor Andy!" cried Ellen, "he'd have lost his way twenty times before he got to the bridge."

"Faith then he must be greatly altered," said Dalton, "for I've seen him track a fox for twenty miles of ground, when not a dog of the pack could come on the trace. Eh, Andy!" cried he, aloud, and stooping down so as to be heard by the old man, "do you remember the cover at Corralin?"

"Don't ask him, father," said Ellen, eagerly; "he cannot sleep for the whole night after his old memories have been awakened."

The spell, however, had begun to work; and the old man, letting fall both knife and turnip, placed his hands on his knees, and in a weak reedy treble began a strange monotonous kind of air, as if to remind himself of the words, which, after a minute or two, he remembered thus:

"There was old Tom Whaley,
And Anthony Baillie,
And Fitzgerald, the Knight of Glynn,
And Father Clare,
On his big brown mare,
That mornin' at Corralin!"

"Well done, Andy! well done!" exclaimed Dalton. "You 're as fresh as a four-year-old."

"Iss!" said Andy, and went on with his song.

"And Miles O'Shea,
On his cropped tail' bay,
Was soon seen ridin' in.
He was vexed and crossed
At the light hoar frost,
That mornin' at Corralin."

"Go on, Addy! go on, my boy!" exclaimed Dalton, in a rapture at the words that reminded him of many a day in the field and many a night's hard carouse. "What comes next?"

"Ay!" cried Andy.

"Says he, 'when the wind
Laves no scent behind,
To keep the dogs out 's a sin;
I 'll be d—d if I stay,
To lose my day,
This mornin' at Corralin.'

But ye see he was out in his recknin'!" cried Andy; "for, as if

> To give him the lie
> There rose a cry
> As the hounds came yelpin' in,
> And from every throat
> There swelled one note,
> That mornin' at Corralin,"

A fit of coughing, brought on by a vigorous attempt to imitate the cry of a pack, here closed Andy's minstrelsy; and Ellen, who seemed to have anticipated some such catastrophe, now induced her father to return to the sitting-room, while she proceeded to use those principles of domestic medicine — clapping on the back and cold water — usually deemed of efficacy in like cases.

"There now, no more singing, but take up your knife and do what I bade you," said she, affecting an air of rebuke; while the old man, whose perceptions did not rise above those of a spaniel, hung down his head in silence. At the same moment the outer door of the kitchen opened, and Kate Dalton entered. Taller and several years younger than her sister, she was in the full pride of that beauty of which blue eyes and dark hair are the chief characteristics, and is deemed by many as peculiarly Irish. Delicately fair, and with features regular as a Grecian model, there was a look of brilliant, almost of haughty, defiance about her, to which her gait and carriage seemed to contribute; nor could the humble character of her dress, where strictest poverty declared itself, disguise the sentiment.

"How soon you're back, dearest," said Ellen, as she took off the dripping cloak from her sister's shoulders.

"And only think, Ellen, I was obliged to go to Lichtenthal, where little Hans spends all his evenings in the winter season, at the 'Hahn!' And just fancy his gallantry! He would see me home, and would hold up the umbrella, too, over my head, although it kept his own arm at full stretch; while, by the pace we walked, I did as much for his legs. It is very ungrateful to laugh at him, for he said a hundred pretty things to me, — about my courage to venture out in such weather, — about my accent as I spoke German, — and lastly, in praise of my skill as a sculptor. Only fancy, Ellen, what a humiliation for me to confess that all these pretty devices were yours, and not mine; and that my craft went no further than seeking for the material which your genius was to fashion."

"Genius, Kate!" exclaimed Ellen, laughing. "Has Master Hans been giving you a lesson in flattery; but tell me of your success — which has he taken?"

"All — everything!" cried Kate; "for although at the beginning the little fellow would select one figure and then change it for another, it was easy to see that he could not bring himself to part with any of them; now, sitting down in rapture before the 'Travelling Student,' — now, gazing delightedly at the 'Charcoal-Burners,' — but all his warmest enthusiasm bursting forth as I produced the 'Forest Maiden at the Well.' He did, indeed, think the 'Pedlar' too handsome, but he found no such fault with the Maiden: and here, dearest — here are the proceeds, for I told him that we must have ducats in shining gold for Frank's new crimson purse; and here they are;" and

she held up a purse of gay colours, through whose meshes the bright metal glittered.

"Poor Hans!" said Ellen, feelingly. "It is seldom that so humble an artist meets so generous a patron."

"He 's coming to-night," said Kate, as she smoothed down the braids of her glossy hair before a little glass, "he 's coming to say good-bye to Frank. He is so fond of Frank."

"And of Frank's sister Nelly; nay, no blushing, dearest; for myself, I am free to own admiration never comes amiss even when offered by as humble a creature as the Dwarf, Hans Roëckle."

"For shame, Kate, for shame. It is this idle vanity that stifles honest pride, as rank weeds destroy the soil for wholesome plants to live in."

"It is very well for you, Nelly, to talk of pride, but poor things like myself are fain to content themselves with the baser metal, and even put up with vanity! There, now, no sermons, no seriousness; I'll listen to nothing to-day that savours of sadness, and, as I hear Pa and Frank laughing, I 'll be of the party."

The glance of affection and admiration which Ellen bestowed upon her sister, was not unmixed with an expression of painful anxiety; and the sigh that escaped her told with what tender interest she watched over her.

The little dinner, prepared with more than usual care, at length appeared, and the family sat around the humble board with a sense of happiness dashed by one only reflection — that on the morrow Frank's place would be vacant.

Still each exerted himself to overcome the sadness of that thought, or even to dally with it, as one suggestive of pleasure; and when Ellen placed unexpectedly a great flask of Margräer before them to drink the young soldier's health, the zest and merriment rose to the highest. Nor was old Andy forgotten in the general joy. A large bumper of wine was put before him, and the door of the sitting-room left open, as if to let him participate in the merry noises that prevailed there. How naturally, and instinctively, too, their hopes gave colour to all they said, as they told each other that the occasion was a happy one! that dear Frank would soon be an officer, and of course distinguished by the favour of some one high in power; and lastly they dwelt with such complacency on the affectionate regard and influence of "Count Stephen" as certain to secure the youth's advancement. They had often heard of the Count's great military fame, and the esteem in which he was held by the Court of Vienna; and now they speculated on the delight it would afford the old warrior — who had never been married himself — to have one like Frank, to assist by his patronage, and promote by his influence, and with such enthusiasm did they discuss the point, that at last they actually persuaded themselves that Frank's entering the service was a species of devotion to his relative's interests, by affording him an object worthy of his regard and affection.

While Ellen loved to dwell upon the great advantages of one who should be like a father to the boy, aiding him by wise counsel, and guiding him in every difficulty, Kate preferred to fancy the Count introducing Frank into all the brilliant society of the splen-

did capital, presenting him to those whose acquaintance was distinction, and at once launching him into the world of fashion and enjoyment. The promptitude with which he acceded to their father's application on Frank's behalf, was constantly referred to as the evidence of his affectionate feeling for the family; and if his one solitary letter was of the very briefest and driest of all epistolary essays, they accounted for this — very naturally — by the length of time which had elapsed since he had either spoken or written his native language.

In the midst of these self-gratulations and pleasant fancies the door opened, and Hans Roëckle appeared, covered from head to foot by a light hoar frost, that made him look like the figure with which an ingenious confectioner sometimes decorates a cake. The Dwarf stood staring at the signs of a conviviality so new and unexpected.

"Is this Christmas time, or Holy Monday, or the Three Kings' festival, or what it is, that I see you all feasting?" cried Hans, shaking the snow off his hat, and proceeding to remove a cloak which he had draped over his shoulder in most artistic folds.

"We were drinking Frank's health, Master Hans," said Dalton, "before he leaves us. Come over and pledge him too, and wish him all success, and that he may live to be a good and valued soldier of the Emperor."

Hans had by this time taken off his cloak, which, by mounting on a chair, he contrived to hang up, and now approached the table with great solemnity, a pair of immense boots of Russian leather, that reached to his hips, giving him a peculiarly cumbrous and heavy

gait; but these, as well as a long vest of rabbit skins that buttoned close to the neck, made his invariable costume in the winter.

"I drink," said the Dwarf, as, filling a bumper, he turned to each of the company severally; "I drink to the venerable father and the fair maidens, and the promising youth of this good family, and I wish them every blessing good Christians ought to ask for; but as for killing and slaying, for burning villages and laying waste cities, I 've no sympathy with these."

"But you are speaking of barbarous times, Master Hans," said Kate, whose cheek mantled into scarlet as she spoke, "when to be strong was to be cruel, and when ill-disciplined hordes tyrannised over good citizens."

"I am talking of soldiers, such as the world has ever seen them," cried Hans, passionately; but of whose military experiences, it is but fair to say, his own little toy-shop supplied all the source. "What are they?" cried he, "but toys that never last, whether he who plays with them be Child or Kaiser! always getting smashed, heads knocked off here, arms and legs astray there; ay, and strangest of all, thought most off when most disabled! and then at last packed up in a box or a barrack, it matters not which, to be forgotten and seen no more! Hadst thou thought of something useful, boy — some good craft, a Jäger with a corkscrew inside of him, a tailor that turns into a pair of snuffers, a Dutch lady that makes a pincushion — these are toys people don't weary of — but a soldier! to stand ever thus" — and Hans shouldered the fire-shovel, and stood "at the present." "To wheel about so — walk ten steps here — ten back

there — never so much as a glance at the pretty girl who is passing close beside you." Here he gave a look of such indescribable tenderness toward Kate, that the whole party burst into a fit of laughter. "They would have drawn me for the conscription," said Hans, proudly, "but I was the only son of a widow, and they could not."

"And are you never grieved to think what glorious opportunities of distinction have been thus lost to you?" said Kate, who, notwithstanding Ellen's imploring looks, could not resist the temptation of amusing herself with the Dwarf's vanity.

"I have never suffered that thought to weigh upon me," cried Hans, with the most unsuspecting simplicity. "It is true, I might have risen to rank and honours; but how would they have suited *me*, or I *them?* Or how should I have made those dearest to me sharers in a fortune so unbecoming to us all? Think of poor Hans' old mother, if her son were to ask her blessing with a coat all glittering with stars and crosses; and then think of her as I have seen her, when I go, as I do every year, to visit her in the Bregentzer Wald, when she comes out to meet me with our whole village, proud of her son, and yet not ashamed of herself. That is glory — that is distinction enough for Hans Roëckle."

The earnestness of his voice, and the honest manliness of his sentiments, were more than enough to cover the venial errors of a vanity that was all simplicity. It is true that Hans saw the world only through the medium of his own calling, and that not a very exalted one; but still there went through all the narrownesses of his views a tone of kindliness —

a hearty spirit of benevolence, that made his simplicity at times rise into something almost akin to wisdom. He had known the Daltons as his tenants, and soon perceived that they were not like those rich English, from whom his countrymen derive such abundant gains. He saw them arrive at a season when all others were taking their departure, and detected in all their efforts at economy, not alone that they were poor, but, sadder still, that they were of those who seem never to accustom themselves to the privations of narrow fortune; for, while some submit in patience to their humble lot, with others, life is one long and hard-fought struggle, wherein health, hope, and temper, are expended in vain. That the Daltons maintained a distance and reserve towards others of like fortune did, indeed, puzzle honest Hans — perhaps it displeased him, too — for he thought it might be pride; but then their treatment of himself disarmed that suspicion, for they not only received him ever cordially, but with every sign of real affection, and what was he to expect such? Nor were these the only traits that fascinated him; for all the rugged shell, the kernel was a heart as tender, as warm, and as full of generous emotions, as ever beat within an ampler breast. The two sisters, in Hans' eyes, were alike beautiful; each had some grace or charm that he had never met with before, nor could he ever satisfy himself whether his fancy was more taken by Kate's wit, or by Ellen's gentleness.

If anything were needed to complete the measure of his admiration, their skill in carving those wooden figures, which he sold, would have been sufficient. These were in his eyes — nor was he a mean con-

noisseur — high efforts of genius; and Hans saw in them a poetry and a truthfulness to nature that such productions rarely, if ever, possess. To sell such things as mere toys, he regarded as little short of a sacrilege, while even to part with them at all, cost him a pang like that the gold-worker of Florence experienced, when he saw some treasure of Benvenuto's chisel leave his possession. Not, indeed, that honest Hans had to struggle against that criminal passion which prompted the jeweller, even by deeds of assassination, to repossess himself of the coveted objects; nay, on the contrary, he felt a kindness and a degree of interest towards those in whose keeping they were, as if some secret sympathy united them to each other.

Is it any wonder if poor Hans forgot himself in such pleasant company, and sat a full hour and a half longer than he ought? To him the little intervals of silence that were occasionally suffered to intervene, were but moments of dreamy and delicious reverie, wherein his fancy wandered away in a thousand pleasant paths; and when at last the watchman — for remember, good reader, they were in that primitive Germany where customs change not, too abruptly — announced two o'clock, little Hans did not vouchsafe a grateful response to the quaint old rhyme that was chanted beneath the window.

"That little chap would sit to the day of judgment, and never ask to wet his lips," said Dalton, as Frank accompanied the Dwarf down stairs to the street door.

"I believe he not only forgot the hour, but where he was, and everything else," said Kate.

"And poor Frank! who should have been in bed some hours ago," sighed Nelly.

"Gone at last, girls," exclaimed Frank, as he entered laughing. "If it hadn't been a gust of wind that caught him at the door, and carried him clean away, our leave-taking might have lasted till morning. Poor fellow! he had so many cautions to give me — such mountains of good counsel; and see, here is a holy medal he made me accept. He told me the 'Swedes' would never harm me so long as I wore it. He still fancies that we are in the Thirty Years' War."

In a hearty laugh over Hans Roëckle's political knowledge, they wished each other an affectionate good-night, and separated. Frank was to have his breakfast by daybreak, and each sister affected to leave the care of that meal to the other, secretly resolving to be up and stirring first.

Save old Andy, there was not one disposed to sleep that night. All were too full of their own cares. Even Dalton himself, blunted as were his feelings by a long life of suffering, his mind was tortured by anxieties; and one sad question arose again and again before him, without an answer ever occurring. "What is to become of the girls when I am gone? Without a home, they will soon be without a protector!" The bright fancies, the hopeful visions in which the evening had been passed, made the revulsion to these gloomy thoughts the darker. He lay with his hands pressed upon his face, while the hot tears gushed from eyes that never before knew weeping.

At moments he half resolved not to let Frank depart, but an instant's thought showed him how futile would be the change. It would be but leaving him to share the poverty — to depend upon the scanty

pittance already too little for themselves. "Would Count Stephen befriend the poor girls?" he asked himself over and over; and in his difficulty he turned to the strange epistle, in which the old general announced Frank's appointment as a cadet.

The paper, the square folding, the straight, stiff letters, well suited a style which plainly proclaimed how many years his English had lain at rest. The note ran thus: —

"Graben-Wien, Octobre 9, 18—.

"Worthy Sir and Nephew,

"Your kindly greeting, but long-time-on-the-road-coming-letter is in my hands. It is to me pleasure that I announce the appointment of your son as a Cadet in the seventh battalion of the Carl-Franz Infanterie. So with, let him in all speed of time report himself here at Wien, before the War's Minister, bringing his Tauf-schein — Baptism's sign — as proof of Individualism.

"I am yours, well to command, and much loving kinsman,

"Graf. Dalton von Auersberg,

"Lieut.-General and Feld-Zeug Meister, K.K.A.

"To the high and well-born, the Frei Herr v. Dalton,
in Baden-Baden."

CHAPTER III.

"The Forest Road."

This dry epistle Dalton read and re-read, trying, if not to discover some touch of kindliness or interest, to detect, at least, some clue to its writer's nature; but to no use, its quaint formalism baffled all speculation, and he gave up the pursuit in despair. That "the Count" was his father's only brother, and a "Dalton," were the only grains of comfort he could extract from his meditations; but he had lived long enough in the world to know how little binding were the ties of kindred when once slackened by years and distance. The Count might, therefore, regard them in the light of intruders, and feel the very reverse of pleasure at the revival of a relationship which had slept for more than half a century. Dalton's pride — or what he thought his pride — revolted against this thought; for, although this same pride would not have withheld him from asking a favour of the Count, it would have assumed a most indignant attitude if refused, or even grudgingly accorded.

When the thought first occurred to him of applying to his uncle in Frank's behalf, he never hesitated about the propriety of addressing a request to one with whom he had never interchanged a line in all his life; and now he was quite ready to take offence, if all the warmth of blood relationship should not fill

the heart of him who had been an exile from home and family, since his earliest boyhood.

An easy, indolent selfishness had been the spirit of Dalton's whole life. He liked to keep a good house, and to see company about him; and this obtained for him the reputation of hospitality. He disliked unpopularity, and dreaded the "bad word" of the people; and hence he suffered his tenantry to fall into arrears and his estate into ruin. A vain rivalry with wealthier neighbours, prevented retrenchment when his means were lessened. The unthinking selfishness of his nature was apparent even in his marriage, since it was in obedience to an old pledge extracted years before, that Miss Godfrey accepted him, and parted in anger with her brother, who had ever loved her with the warmest affection. Mr. Godfrey never forgave his sister; and at his death, the mysterious circumstances of which were never cleared up, his estate passed to a distant relative, the rich Sir Gilbert Stafford.

Dalton, who long cherished the hope of a reconciliation, saw all prospect vanish when his wife died, which she did, it was said, of a broken heart. His debts were already considerable; and all the resources of borrowing and mortgage had been long since exhausted; nothing was then left for him but an arrangement with his creditors, which, giving him a pittance scarcely above the very closest poverty, enabled him to drag out life in the cheap places of the Continent; and thus, for nigh twenty years, had he wandered about from Dieppe to Ostend, to Bruges, to Dusseldorf, to Coblentz, and so on, among the small Ducal cities, till, with still failing fortune, he

was fain to seek a residence for the winter in Baden, where house-rent, at least, would be almost saved to him.

The same apathy that had brought on his ruin enabled him to bear it. Nothing has such a mock resemblance to wisdom, as utter heartlessness; with all the seeming of true philosophy, it assumes a port and bearing above the trials of the world; holds on "the even tenor of its way," undeterred by the reverses which overwhelm others, and even meets the sternest frowns of fortune with the bland smile of equanimity.

In this way Dalton had deceived many who had known him in better days, and who now saw him even in his adversity, with the same careless, good-natured look, as when he took the field with his own hounds, or passed round the claret at his own table. Even his own children were sharers in this delusion, and heard him with wondering admiration, as he told of the life he used to lead, and the style he once kept up at Mount Dalton. These were his favourite topics; and, as he grew older, he seemed to find a kind of consolation in contrasting all the hard rubs of present adversity with his once splendour.

Upon Ellen Dalton, who had known and could still remember her mother, these recitals produced an impression of profound grief, associated as they were with the sufferings of a sick bed and the closing sorrows of a life. While, in the others, they served to keep up a species of pride of birth, and an assumption of superiority to others of like fortune,

which their father gloried in, representing, as he used to say, "the old spirit of the Daltons."

As for Kate, she felt it a compensation for present poverty to know that they were of gentle blood, and that if fortune, at some distant future, would deal kindly by them, to think that they should not obtrude themselves like upstarts on the world, but resume, as it were, the place that was long their own.

In Frank the evil had taken a deeper root. Taught from his earliest infancy to believe himself the heir of an ancient house, pride of birth and station instilled into his mind by old Andy the huntsman, the only dependent, who, with characteristic wisdom, they had carried with them from Ireland, he never ceased to ponder on the subject, and wonder within himself if he should ever live to have "his own" again.

Such a hold had this passion taken of him, that, even as a child, he would wander away for days long into lonely and unfrequented spots, thinking over the stories he had heard, and trying to conjure up before his eyes some resemblance to that ancient house and venerable domain which had been so long in his family. It was no part of his teaching to know by what spendthrift and reckless waste, by what a long career of folly, extravagance and dissipation, the fortune of his family had been wrecked; or rather, many vague and shadowy suspicions had been left to fester in his mind of wrongs and injuries done them; of severe laws imposed by English ignorance or cruelty; of injustice, on this hand — heartless indifference of friends on the other; the unrelenting anger of his uncle, Godfrey, filling up the measure of their calamities. Frank Dalton's education went very little further than this; but

bad as it was, its effect was blunted by the natural frankness and generosity of his character, its worst fruits being an over-estimate of himself and his pretensions — errors which the world has always the watchful kindness to correct in those who wear threadbare coats and patched boots.

He was warmly and devotedly attached to his father and sisters, and whatever bitterness found its way into his heart was from seeing them enduring the many trials of poverty.

All his enthusiasm for the service in which he was about to enter was, therefore, barely sufficient to overcome the sorrow of parting with those, whom alone of all the world he loved; and when the moment drew nigh for his departure, he forgot the bright illusions by which he had so often fed his hopes, and could only think of the grief of separation.

His candle had burned down, nearly to the socket, when he arose and looked at his watch. It was all dark as midnight, without, although nigh six o'clock. He opened the window, and a thin snow-drift came slanting in, borne on a cutting north wind; he closed it hastily, and shuddered as he thought of the long and lonely march before him. All was silent in the house as he dressed himself and prepared for the road. With noiseless step he drew near his father's door and listened; everything was still. He could not bring himself to disturb him, so he passed on to the room where his sisters slept. The door lay ajar, and a candle was burning on the table. Frank entered on tip-toe and drew near the bed, but it was empty and had not been lain in. As he turned round he beheld Kate asleep in a chair, dressed as he had last seen

her. She had never lain down, and the prayer-book which had dropped from her hand, told how her last waking moments were passed.

He kissed her twice, but even the hot tears that fell from his eyes upon her cheek did not break her slumber. He looked about him for some token to leave, that might tell he had been there, but there was nothing, and, with a low sigh, he stole from the room.

As he passed out into the kitchen Ellen was there. She had already prepared his breakfast, and was spreading the table when he entered.

"How good of you — how kind, Ellen," said he, as he passed his arm around her neck.

"Hush, Frank, they are both sleeping. Poor papa never closed his eyes till half-an-hour ago, and Kate was fairly overcome ere she yielded."

"You will say that I kissed them, Nelly — kissed them twice," said he, in a low, broken voice, "and that I couldn't bear to awake them. Leave-taking is so sorrowful! Oh, Ellen, if I knew that you were all happy — that there were no hardships before you, when I'm away!"

"And why should we not, Frank," said she, firmly. "There is no dishonour in this poverty, so long as there are no straits to make it seem other than it is. Let us rather pray for the spirit that may befit any lot we are thrown in, than for a fortune to which we might be unsuited."

"Would you forget who we are, Ellen?" said he, half reproachfully.

"I would remember it, Frank, in a temper less of pride than humility."

"I do not see much of the family spirit in all this," rejoined he, almost angrily.

"The family spirit," echoed she, feelingly. "What has it ever done for us, save injury? Has it suggested a high-bearing courage against the ills of narrow fortune? Has it told us how to bear poverty with dignity, or taught us one single lesson of patience and submission? Or has it, on the contrary, been ever present to whisper the changes in our condition — how altered our lot — making us ashamed of that companionship which our station rendered possible for us, and leaving us in the isolation of friendlessness for the sake of — I blush to abuse the word — our Pride! Oh, Frank, my dear, dear brother, take it not ill of me, that in our last moments together, perhaps, for years, that I speak what may jar upon your ears to hear; but remember that I am much older — that I have seen far more of the world, at least of its sorrows and cares, than you have. I have indeed known affliction in many ways, but have never found a poorer comforter in its troubles, than what we call our Pride!"

"You would have me forget I am a Dalton, then?" said the boy, in a tone of sorrowful meaning.

"Never! when the recollection could prompt a generous or a noble action, a manly ambition, or a high-hearted thought; but the name will have no spell in it, if used to instil an imperious, discontented spirit — a regretful contrast of what we are, with what we might have been, or what in a worldly sense is more destructive still, a false reliance on the distinction of a family to which we have contributed nothing."

"You do not know, Nelly, dearest, of what a comfort you have robbed me," said Frank, sorrowfully.

"Do not say so, my dearest brother," cried she, passing her arm around him; "a deception, a mere illusion, is unworthy of that name. Look above the gratification of mere vanity, and you will become steeled against the many wounds self-love is sure to receive in intercourse with the world. I cannot tell how, or with what associates, you are about to live, but I feel certain that in every station a man of truth and honour will make himself respected. Be such, dearest Frank. If family pride — if the name of Dalton have value in your eyes, remember that upon you it rests to assert its right to distinction. If, as I would fondly hope, your heart dwells here with us, bethink ye what joy — what holy gratitude you will diffuse around our humble hearth — to know that our brother is a good man."

It was some moments ere either could speak again. Emotions, very different ones perhaps, filled their hearts, and each was too deeply moved for words. Frank's eyes were full of tears, and his cheek quivering, as he threw his knapsack on his shoulder.

"You will write from Inspruck, Frank; but how many days will it take ere you reach that city?"

"Twelve or fourteen at least, if I go on foot. There, Nelly, do not help me, dearest; I shall not have you to-morrow to fasten these straps."

"This is not to be forgotten, Frank: it's Kate's present. How sorry she will be not to have given it with her own hands!" and so saying, she gave him the purse her sister had worked.

"But there is gold in it," said the boy, growing pale with emotion.

"Very little, Frank, dearest," replied she, smiling. "A Cadet must always have gold in his purse, so little Hans tells us; and you know how wise he is in all these matters."

"And is it from a home like this, that I am to take gold away!" cried he, passionately.

"Nay, Frank, you must not persuade us that we are so very poor. I will not consent to any sense of martyrdom, I promise you." It was not without difficulty she could overcome his scruples; nor, perhaps, had she succeeded at all, if his thoughts had not been diverted into another channel, by a light tapping at the door. It was Hans Roëckle come to awake him.

Again and again the brother and sister embraced; and in a very agony of tears Frank tore himself away, and hastened down the stairs. The next moment the heavy house-door banged loudly, and he was gone.

Oh, the loneliness of mind in which he threaded his way through the dark and narrow streets, where the snow already lay deeply! With what sinking of the heart he turned to look for the last time at the window where the light — the only one to be seen — still glimmered. How little could all the promptings of hope suffice against the sad and dark reality that he was leaving all he loved, and all who loved him, to adventure upon a world where all was bleak and friendless!

But not all his dark forebodings could equal hers from whom he had just parted. Loving her brother with an affection more like that of mother than sister, she had often thought over the traits of his character,

where, with many a noble gift, the evil seeds of wrong teaching had left, like tall weeds among flowers, the baneful errors of inordinate self-esteem and pride. Ignorant of the career on which he was about to enter, Ellen could but speculate vaguely how such a character would be esteemed, and whether his native frankness and generosity would cover over, or make appear as foibles, these graver faults. Their own narrow fortunes, the many straits and privations of poverty, with all their cruel wounds to honest pride, and all their sore trials of temper, she could bear up against with an undaunted courage. She had learned her lesson in the only school wherein it is taught, and daily habit had instilled its own powers of endurance; but, for Frank, her ambition hoped a higher and brighter destiny, and now, in her solitude, and with a swelling heart, she knelt down and prayed for him. And, oh! if the utterings of such devotion never rise to Heaven or meet acceptance there, they at least bring balm to the spirit of him who syllables them, building up a hope whose foundations are above the casualties of humanity, and giving a courage that mere self-reliance never gave!

Little Hans not only came to awaken Frank, but to give him companionship for some miles of his way — a thoughtful kindness, for which the youth's deep pre-occupation seemed to offer but a poor return. Indeed, Frank scarcely knew that he was not travelling in utter solitude, and all the skilful devices of the worthy Dwarf to turn the channel of his thoughts were fruitless. Had there been sufficient light to have surveyed the equipment of his companion, it is more than probable that the sight would have done more to produce this diversion of gloom than any arguments which

could have been used. Master Roëckle, whose mind was a perfect storehouse of German horrors, earthly and unearthly, and who imagined that a great majority of the human population of the globe were either bandits or witches, had surrounded himself with a whole museum of amulets and charms of various kinds. In his cap he wore the tail of a black squirrel, as a safeguard against the "Forest Imp;" a large dried toad hung around his neck, like an order, to protect him from the evil eye; a duck's foot was fastened to the tassel of his boot, as a talisman against drowning; while strings of medals, coins, precious stones, blessed beads, and dried insects, hung round and about him in every direction. Of all the portions of his equipment, however, what seemed the most absurd was a huge pole-axe of the fifteenth century, and which he carried as a defence against mere mortal foes, but which, from its weight and size, appeared far more likely to lay its bearer low than inflict injury upon others. It had been originally stored up in the Rüst-Kammer, at Prague, and was said to be the identical weapon with which Conrad slew the giant at Leutmeritz, a fact which warranted Hans in expending two hundred florins in purchasing it; as, to use his own emphatic words, "It was not every day one knew where to find the weapon to bring down a giant."

As Hans, encumbered by his various adjuncts, trotted along beside his stalwart companion, he soon discovered that all his conversational ability — to exert which cost him so dearly — was utterly unattended to; he fell into a moody silence, and thus they journeyed for miles of way without interchanging a word. At last they came in sight of the little village

of Hernitz Kretschen, whence by a by-road Frank was to reach the regular line that leads through the Höhlen Thal to the Lake of Constance, and where they were to part.

"I feel as though I could almost go all the way with you," said Hans, as they stopped to gaze upon the little valley where lay the village, and beyond which stretched a deep forest of dark pine trees, traversed by a single road.

"Nay, Hans," said Frank, smiling, as for the first time he beheld the strange figure beside him; "you must go back to your pleasant little village and live happily, to do many a kindness to others, as you have done to me to-day."

"I would like to take service with the Empress myself," said Hans, "if it were for some good and great cause, like the defence of the Church against the Turks, or the extermination of the race of dragons that infest the Lower Danube."

"But you forget, Hans, it is an Emperor rules over Austria now," said Frank, preferring to offer a correction to the less startling of his hallucinations.

"No, no, Master Frank, they have not deposed the good Maria Teresa — they would never do that. I saw her picture over the doorway of the Burgermeister, the last time I went to visit my mother in the Bregentzer Wald, and by the same token her crown and sceptre were just newly gilt — a thing they would not have done if she were not on the throne."

"What if she were dead, and her son too?" said Frank; but his words were scarce uttered when he re-

gretted to have said them, so striking was the change that came over the Dwarf's features.

"If that were indeed true, Heaven have mercy on us!" exclaimed he, piously. "Old Frederic will have but little pity for good Catholics! But no, Master Frank, this cannot be. The last time I received soldiers from Nuremberg they wore the same uniforms as ever, and the 'Moriamur pro Rege nostro, M. T.' was in gold letters on every banner as before."

Frank was in no humour to disturb so innocent and so pleasing a delusion, and he gave no further opposition, and now they both descended the path which led to the little inn of the village. Here Hans insisted on performing the part of host, and soon the table was covered with brown bread and hard eggs, and those great massive sausages which Germans love, together with various flasks of Margräfler and other "Badisch" wines.

"Who knows," said Hans, as he pledged his guest by ringing his wine-glass against the other's, "if, when we meet again, thou wouldst sit down at the table with such as me."

"How so, Hanserl?" asked the boy, in astonishment.

"I mean, Master Franz, that you may become a Colonel, or perhaps a General, with mayhap the 'St. Joseph' at your button-hole, or the Maria Teresa around your neck; and if so, how could you take your place at the board with the poor toy-maker?"

"I am not ashamed to do so now," said Frank, haughtily; "and the Emperor cannot make me more a Gentleman than my birth has done. Were I to be

ashamed of those who befriended me, I should both disgrace my rank and my name together."

"These are good words, albeit too proud ones," said Hans, thoughtfully. "As a guide through life, pride will do well enough when the roads are good and your equipage costly; but when you come upon mountain-paths and stony tracts, with many a wild torrent to cross, and many a dark glen to traverse, humility — even a child's humility — will give better teaching."

"I have no right to be other than humble!" said the boy; but the flashing brightness of his eyes, and the heightened colour of his cheek, seemed to contradict his words.

For awhile the conversation flagged, or was maintained in short and broken sentences, when at length Frank said,

"You will often go to see them, Hanserl; won't you? You'll sit with them, too, of an evening? for they will feel lonely now; and my father will like to tell you his stories about home, as he calls it still."

"That will I," said Hans; "they are the happiest hours of my life when I sit beside that hearth."

Frank drew his hand across his eyes, and his lips quivered as he tried to speak.

"You'll be kind to poor Ellen, too; she is so timid, Hans. You cannot believe how anxious she is, lest her little carvings should be thought unworthy of praise."

"They are gems! they are treasures of art!" cried Hans, enthusiastically.

"And my sweet Kate!" cried the boy, as his eyes

ran over, while a throng of emotions seemed to stop his utterance.

"She is so beautiful!" exclaimed Hans, fervently. "Except the Blessed Maria at the Holy Cross, I never beheld such loveliness. There is the Angelus ringing; let us pray a blessing on them," and they both knelt down in deep devotion. Frank's lips never moved, but with swelling heart and clasped hands he remained fixed as a statue; while Hanserl in some quaint old rhyme uttered his devotions.

"And yonder is the dog-star, bright and splendid," said Hans, as he arose. "There never was a happier omen for the beginning of a journey. You 'll be lucky, boy; there is the earnest of good fortune. That same star was shining along the path as I entered Baden, eighteen years ago; and see what a lucky life has mine been!"

Frank could not but smile at the poor Dwarf's appreciation of his fortune; but Hanserl's features wore a look that betokened a happy and contented nature.

"And yours has been a lucky life, Hanserl?" said he, half in question.

"Lucky? ay, that has it. I was a poor boy, barefooted and hungry in my native forest — deformed, and stunted, too — a thing to pity — too weak to work, and with none to teach me, and yet even I was not forgotten by Him who made the world so fair and beautiful; but in my heart was planted a desire to be something — to do something, that others might benefit by. The children used to mock me as I passed along the road; but a voice whispered within me, 'Be of courage, Hanserl, they will bless thee, yet — they will

greet thee with many a merry laugh and joyous cry, and call thee their own kind Hanserl: and so have I lived to see it! My name is far and wide over Germany. Little boys and girls know and speak of me amongst the first words they syllable; and from the Palace to the Bauer's hut, Hans Roëckle has his friends; and who knows, that when this poor clay is mingled with the earth, but that my spirit will hover around the Christmas-tree when glad voices call upon me! I often think it will be so."

Frank's eyes glistened as he gazed upon the Dwarf, who spoke with a degree of emotion and feeling very different from his wont.

"So you see, Master Franz," said he, smiling, "there are ambitions of every hue, and this of mine you may deem of the very faintest, but it is enough for me. Had I been a great painter, or a poet, I would have revelled in the thought that my genius adorned the walls of many a noble palace, and that my verses kindled emotions in many a heart that felt like my own; but as one whom nature has not gifted — poor, ignoble, and unlettered — am I not lucky to have found a little world of joyous hearts, and merry voices, who care for me and speak of me? Ay, and who would give me a higher place in their esteem than to Jean Paul, or Göthe himself."

The friends had but time to pledge each other in a parting glass, when the stage drove up by which Hans was to return to Baden. A few hurried words, half-cheering, half-sorrowful — a close embrace — one long and lingering squeeze of the hand.

"Farewell, kind Hanserl;"

"God guide thee, Franz;" — and they parted.

Frank stood in the little "Platz," where the crowd yet lingered, watching the retiring "Post," uncertain which way to turn him. He dreaded to find himself all alone, and yet he shrank from new companionship. The newly-risen moon, and the calm air, invited him to pursue his road; so he set out once more, the very exercise being a relief against his sad thoughts.

Few words are more easily spoken than "He went to seek his fortune;" and what a whole world lies within the narrow compass. A world of high-hearted hopes and doubting fear — of noble ambition to be won, and glorious paths to be trod, mingled with tender thoughts of home and those who made it such. What sustaining courage must be his who dares this course and braves that terrible conflict — the toughest that ever man fought — between his own bright colouring of life and the stern reality of the world. How many hopes has he to abandon — how many illusions to give up. How often is his faith to be falsified and his trustfulness betrayed; and, worst of all, what a fatal change do these trials impress upon himself — how different is he, from what he had been.

Young and untried as Frank Dalton was in life, he was not altogether unprepared for the vicissitudes that awaited him; his sister Nelly's teachings had done much to temper the over-buoyant spirit of his nature, and make him feel that he must draw upon that same courage to sustain the present, rather than to gild the future.

His heart was sorrowful too, at leaving a home where unitedly they had, perhaps, borne up better against poverty. He felt, for his own heart revealed

it — how much can be endured in companionship, and how the burden of misfortune — like every other load — is light when many bear it. Now, thinking of these things, now, fancying the kind of life that might lie before him, he marched along, Then he wondered whether the Count would resemble his father. The Daltons were remarkable for strong traits of family likeness, not alone in feature, but in character — and what a comfort Frank felt in fancying that the old general would be a thorough Dalton in frankness and kindliness of nature, easy in disposition, with all the careless freedom of his own father! How he should love him, as one of themselves.

It is a well-known fact, that certain families are remarkable above others for the importance that they attach to the ties of kindred, making the boast of relationship always superior to the claims of self-formed friendships. This is perhaps more peculiarly the case among those who live little in the world, and whose daily sayings and doings are chiefly confined to the narrow circle of home. But yet it is singular, how long this prejudice — for perhaps it deserves no better name — can stand the conflict of actual life. The Daltons were a special instance of what we mean. Certain characteristics of look and feature distinguished them all, and they all agreed in maintaining the claim of relationship as the strongest bond of union; and it was strange, into how many minor channels this stream meandered. Every old ruin, every monument, every fragment of armour, or ancient volume associated with their name, assumed a kind of religious value in their eyes, and the word Dalton was a talisman to exalt the veriest trifle into the rank of relic.

From his earliest infancy Frank had been taught these lessons. They were the traditions of the parlour and the kitchen, and by the mere force of repetition became a part of his very nature. Corrig-O'Neal was the theme of every story. The ancient house of the family, and which, although by time's changes it had fallen into the hands of the Godfreys — from whom his mother came — was yet regarded with all the feelings of ancient pride. Over and over again was he told of the once princely state that his ancestors held there — the troops of retainers — the mounted followers that ever accompanied them. The old house itself was exalted to the rank of a palace, and its wide-spreading but neglected grounds spoken of like the park of royalty.

To see this old house of his father's, to behold with his own eyes the seat of their once greatness, became the passion of the boy's heart. Never did the Bedouin of the Desert long after Mecca with more heart-straining desire! To such a pitch had this passion gained on him, that, unable any longer to resist an impulse that neither left his thoughts by day nor his dreams by night, he fled from his school at Bruges, and when only ten years old, made his way to Ostend, and under pretence of seeking a return to his family, persuaded the skipper of a trading vessel to give him a passage to Limerick. It would take us too far from our road — already a long one — were we to follow his wanderings and tell of all the difficulties that beset the little fellow on his lonely journey. Enough that we say, he did at last reach the goal of his hopes; and, after a journey of eight long days, find himself at the ancient gate of Corrig-O'Neal.

At first the disappointment was dreadful. The proud mansion, of whose glorious splendour his imagination had created an oriental palace, was an antiquated brick edifice, in front of which ran a long terrace, once adorned with statues, but of which the pedestals alone remained. A few hedges of yew, with here and there the fragments of a marble figure or a fountain, showed that the old French château taste had once prevailed there; and of this a quaint straight avenue of lime trees, reaching directly from the door to the river, also bore evidence. The tone of sadness and desertion was on everything; many of the lower windows were walled up; the great door itself was fastened and barricaded in such a way as to show it had been long disused. Not a creature was to be seen stirring about the place, and save that at night the flickering light of a candle might be descried from a small casement that looked upon the garden, the house might have been deemed uninhabited. Perhaps something in the mysterious desolation of the scene had its influence over the boy's mind; but as hour by hour he lingered in those silent woods, and lay in the deep grass watching the cloud shadows as they stole along, he grew fondly attached to the place; now losing himself in some reverie of the long past, now following out some half-remembered narrative of his mother's childhood, when she herself dwelt there.

All his little resources of pocket-money expended, — his clothes, save such as he wore, sold, — he could scarcely tear himself from a scene that filled every avenue of his heart. The time, however, came, when a ship, about to sail for the Scheldt, gave him

the opportunity of returning home; and now this was to be his last day at Corrig-O'Neal.

And what a day of conflicting thought was it — now half resolved to approach the house, and ask to see his uncle, and now repelled by remembering all his unkindness to his father. Then marvelling whether some change might not have taken place in the old man's mind, and whether in his lonely desolation he might not wish once more to see his kindred near him.

He knew not what to do, and evening found him still undecided; and sitting on a little rising spot, from which the view extended over the garden at the back of the house, and whence he had often watched the solitary light that marked the old man's vigils.

Wearied by long watching and thought, he fell asleep; and when he awoke, the light was gone — the light which hitherto had always burned till daybreak! and from the darkness it must now be far from that hour. While Frank wondered what this might mean, he was startled by hearing footsteps near him — at least so they sounded — on the gravel-walk of the garden, and in a few minutes after the grating sound of a key, and the opening of a small door which led out into the wood. He now perceived that a man was standing at the foot of the knoll, who seemed irresolute and undecided; for he twice returned to the door, once introduced the key, and again withdrew it, as if with a changed purpose. Suddenly he appeared to have made up his mind, for, stooping down, he began to dig with the greatest energy, stopping at intervals to listen, and again continuing his work when satisfied that he was unobserved.

The hour — the scene itself — the evident secrecy of the man, almost paralysed the boy with terror; nor was it till long after the turf was replaced, dry leaves and dead branches were strewn over the spot, and the man himself gone, that Frank gained courage to move away. This he did at first cautiously and timidly, and then with a speed that soon carried him far away from the spot. The following day he was at sea; and if at first the strange scene never left his thoughts, with time the impression faded away, till at length it assumed the indistinctness of a vision, or of some picture created by mere imagination.

When he did return home, he never revealed, except to Nelly, where he had been, and the object for which he went; but, even to her, from some strange love of mystery, he told nothing of the last night's experience: this was a secret, which he hoarded like a miser's treasure, and loved to think that he only knew of. The stirring events of a schoolboy's life, at first, and subsequently the changeful scenes of opening manhood, gradually effaced the impression of what he had seen, or merely left it to all the indistinctness of a dream.

And thus are thoughts often sealed up in the memory for years — unnoticed and unknown — till, after a long interval, they are all called forth, and become the very pivots on which turns our destiny.

CHAPTER IV.

The Onslows.

The little town of Baden was thrown into a state of considerable excitement by the unexpected arrival we have chronicled in a preceding chapter, and the host of "the Russie" reduced to the most uncommon straits to restore the effective of a staff, now brought down to the closest economy of retrenchment. Cooks, waiters, and housemaids, were sought after in every quarter, while emissaries were despatched right and left to replenish the larder and provide for the wants of the mighty "Englander." Nor was all the bustle and commotion limited to within the hotel, but extended throughout the village itself, where many a rustic pony, laid up in ordinary for the winter, was again trimmed and curried and shod, to be paraded before the windows with a scarlet-saddle cloth and a worsted tassel to the bridle, in all the seductive attraction of a palfry. Even flower girls made their appearance again with a few frost-nipped buds and leaves; while a bassoon and a triangle, voting themselves a band, gave horrid signs of their means of persecution.

Meanwhile were the fortunate individuals, for whose benefit these exertions were evoked, in the most blissful ignorance of all the interest they were awakening. From the first moment of their arrival none had even seen them. Waited upon by their own servants,

scarcely heard, not even appearing at the windows, they were unconsciously ministering to a mystery that now engaged every tongue and ear around them. As, however, nothing of secrecy had any share in their proceedings, we have no scruple in invading the presence and introducing the reader to the company.

Sir Stafford Onslow was an immensely rich London Banker, who in his capacity of borough member had voted steadily with the Whigs for some fife-and-twenty years; supporting them by all the influence of his wealth and family, and who now came abroad, in a pet of sulk with his party, on being refused the peerage. By nature generous, kind-hearted, and affectionate, the constant pressure of a more ambitious wife had involved him in a career to which neither his taste nor habits suited him. The fortune which he would have dispensed with dignity and munificence, he was eternally taught to believe should be the stepping-stone to something higher in rank. All his influence in the City, of which he was justly proud, he was told was a mere vulgar ambition in comparison with that a coronet would bestow on him, and in fact, having believed himself the leading man of a great section in society, he was led to look upon his position with discontent, and fancy that his just claims were disregarded and denied. Lady Hester Onslow, who having once been a beauty and the admired belle of Royalty itself, had accepted the Banker in a moment of pique, and never forgave him afterwards the unhappy preference.

Belonging to a very ancient but poor family, few were surprised at her accepting a husband some thirty-odd years her senior; and it is probable that she

would fully have recognised the prudence of her choice if, by the death of a distant relative in India, which occurred a few months after her marriage, she had not acquired a very large fortune. This sudden accession of wealth coming, as she herself said, "too late," embittered every hour of her after-life.

Had she been wealthy but a few months back, she had married the man she loved, or whom she thought she loved, the heartless, handsome, well-mannered Lord Norwood, a penniless Viscount, ruined before he came of age, and with no other means of support than the faculties which knavery had sharpened into talent.

Miss Onslow and her brother, both the children of a former marriage, were strikingly like their father not alone in feature, but in the traits of his frank and generous character. They were devotedly attached to him, not the less, perhaps, from the circumstances of a marriage to which they were strongly opposed, and whose results they now saw in many a passage of discord and disagreement.

George and Sydney Onslow were both dark-complexioned and black-eyed, and had many traits of Spanish origin in appearance, their mother having been from that country. Lady Hester was a blonde, and affected to think that the southern tint was but an approximation to the negro. Nor was she less critical on their manners, whose joyous freedom she pronounced essentially vulgar. Such, in a few words, were the discordant elements which Fate had bound up as a family, and who now, by the sudden illness of Sir Stafford, were driven to seek refuge in the deserted town of Baden. Nor can we omit another who,

although not tied to the rest by kindred, had been long a member of the circle. This was Dr. Grounsell, an old college friend of Sir Stafford's, and who, having lost every shilling of his fortune by a speculation, had taken up his home at the Banker's many years previous to his second marriage. Lady Hester's dislike to him amounted to actual hatred. She detested him for the influence he possessed over her husband — for the sturdiness of a character that resisted every blandishment — for a quaintness that certainly verged upon vulgarity, and, most of all, for the open and undisguised manner he always declared against every scheme for the attainment of a title.

As Sir Stafford's physician, the only one in whom he had confidence, the Doctor was enabled to stand his ground against attacks which must have conquered him; and by dint of long resistance and a certain obstinacy of character he had grown to take pleasure in an opposition, which, to a man of more refinement and feeling, must have proved intolerable; and although decidedly attached to Sir Stafford and his children, it is probable that he was still more bound to them by hate to "my lady," than by all his affection for themselves.

Grounsell detested the Continent, yet he followed them abroad, resolved never to give up an inch of ground uncontested; and although assailed by a thousand slights and petty insults, he stood stoutly up against them all, defying every effort of fine ladyism, French cookery, homœopathy, puppyism, and the water-cure, to dislodge him from his position. There was very possibly more of dogged malice in all this, than amiability or attachment to his friends, but it is

due to the Doctor to say, that he was no hypocrite, and would never have blinked the acknowledgment, if fairly confronted with the charge.

Although if it had not been for my lady's resentful notice of the ministerial neglect, the whole family would have been snugly domesticated in their beautiful villa beside the Thames at Richmond, she artfully contrived to throw the whole weight of every annoyance they experienced upon every one's shoulders rather than her own; and as she certainly called to her aid no remarkable philosophy against the inconveniences of travel, the budget of her grievances assumed a most imposing bulk.

Dressed in the very perfection of a morning costume, her cap, her gloves, her embroidered slippers, all in the most accurate keeping with that assumed air of seclusion by which fine ladies compliment the visitor fortunate enough to be admitted to their presence, Lady Hester sat at a window, occasionally looking from the deep lace that bordered her handkerchief to the picturesque scene of mountain and river that lay before her. A fastidious taste might have found something to be pleased with in either, but assuredly her handsome features evinced no agreeable emotion, and her expression was that of utter "ennui" and listlessness.

At another window sat Sydney Onslow drawing; her brother standing behind her chair, and from time to time adding his counsels, but in a tone studiously low and whispered. "Get that shadow in something deeper Syd, and you 'll have more effect in the distance."

"What is that I hear about effect and distance?" sighed out my lady. "You surely are not drawing?"

"Only sketching; making a hurried note of that wheel, and the quaint old-fashioned house beside it," said Sydney, diffidently.

"What a refinement of cruelty! The detestable noise of that mill kept me awake all night, and you mean to perpetuate the remembrance by a picture. Pray, be a good child and throw it out of the window."

Sydney looked up in her brother's face, where already a crimson flush of anger was gathering, but before she could reply he spoke for her. "The drawing is for me, Lady Onslow. You 'll excuse me if I do not consent to the fate you propose for it."

"Let me look at it," said she, languidly, and the young girl arose and presented the drawing to her. "How droll!" said she, laughing; "I suppose it is peculiar to Germany, that water can run up hill."

"The shadow will correct that," said Sydney, smiling; "and when the foreground is darker —" A violent slam of the door cut short the explanation. It was George Onslow, who, too indignant at the practised impertinence toward his sister, dashed out of the room in a passion.

"How underbred your brother will persist in being, my love," said she, calmly; "that vile trick of slamming a door, they learn, I'm told, in the Guards' Club. I'm sure I always thought it was confined to the melodrames one sees at the Porte St. Martin."

At this moment a servant appeared at the door. "Colonel Haggerstone's compliments, my lady, and begs to know how Sir Stafford is to-day."

"Something better," replied she, curtly; and as the man disappeared, she added:

"Whose compliments did he say?"

"I did not hear the name — it sounded like Haggerstone."

"Impossible, child; we know of no such person. What hour is it?"

"A few minutes past two."

"Oh, dear! I fancied it had been four — or five — or six," sighed she, drearily.

"The amiable Doctor has not made his report to-day of your papa, and he went to see him immediately after breakfast."

"He told George that there was no amendment," said Sydney, gravely.

"He told George! Then he did not deign to tell me."

"You were not here at the moment. It was as he passed through the room hurriedly."

"I conclude that I was in my dressing-room. But it is only in keeping with Mr. Grounsell's studied disrespect — a line of conduct I grieve to see him supported in by members of this family."

"Mr. Alfred Jekyl, my lady," said a servant, "with inquiry for Sir Stafford."

"*You* appear to know best, my dear, how your papa is. Pray answer that inquiry."

"Sir Stafford is not better," said Sydney, to the servant.

"Who can all these people be, my dear?" said Lady Hester, with more animation of manner than she had yet exhibited. Jekyl is a name one knows. There are Northamptonshire Jekyls, and, if I mistake not,

it was a Jekyl married Lady Olivia Drossmore, was it not? Oh, what a fool I am to ask *you*, who never know anything of family or connexion! And yet I 'm certain I 've told you over and over the importance — the actual necessity of this knowledge. If you only bestowed upon Burke a tithe of the patience and time I have seen you devote to Lyell, you 'd not commit the shocking mistake you fell into t' other day of discussing the Duchess of Dartley's character with Lord Brandford, from whom she was divorced. Now, you 'd never offend quartz and sandstone by miscalling *their* affinities. But here comes the Doctor."

If Doctor Grounsell had been intended by nature to outrage all ultra-refined notions regarding personal appearance, he could not possibly have been more cunningly fashioned. Somewhat below the middle size, and squarely formed, his legs did not occupy more than a third of his height; his head was preternaturally large, and seemed even larger from a crop of curly yellowish hair, whose flaring ochre only rescued it from the imputation of being a wig. His hands and feet were enormous, requiring a muscular effort to move them that made all his gestures grotesque and uncouth. In addition to these native graces, his clothes were always made much too large for him, from his avowed dislike to the over-tightening and squeezing of modern fashion.

As his whole life had been passed in the superintendence of a great military hospital in the East, wherein all his conversations with his brethren were maintained in technicalities, he had never converted the professional jargon into a popular currency, but used the

terms of art upon all occasions, regardless of the inability of the unmedical world to understand him.

"Well, Sir, what is your report to-day?" said Lady Onslow, assuming her very stateliest of manners.

"Better, and worse, Madam. The arthritis relieved, the cardiac symptoms more imminent."

"Please to bear in mind, Sir, that I have not studied at Apothecaries' Hall."

"Nor I, Madam, but at Edinburgh and Aberdeen, in the faculties of medicine and surgery," said Grounsell, drawing down his waistcoat, and arranging himself in what he considered an order of battle.

"Is papa better, Doctor?" said Sydney, mildly.

"The articular affection is certainly alleviated, but there is mischief here," said Grounsell, placing his hand over his heart; "fibrous tissues, my dear Miss Onslow, — fibrous tissues are ticklish affairs."

"Is this advice to be construed in a moral rather than a medical sense?" said Lady Onslow, with a malicious smile.

"Either, or both," replied the Doctor. "The heart will always be highly susceptible of nervous influence."

"But papa —" broke in Sydney, eagerly.

"Is suffering under metastasis — migratory gout, it may be termed — changing from articular to large organic structures."

"And, of course, you are giving him the old poisons that were in use fifty years ago?"

"What do you mean, Madam," said Grounsell, sternly.

"That shocking thing that drives people mad — colocynth, or colchicum, or something like that. You know what I mean?"

"Happily for me, Madam, I can guess it."

"And are you still as obstinate as ever about the globules?"

"The Homœopathic humbug?"

"If you are polite enough so to designate what I put the most implicit trust in. But I warn you, Sir, I mean to exert my just and rightful influence with Sir Stafford; and in case a very great change does not appear to-morrow, I shall insist upon his trying the aconite."

"If you do, Madam, the Insurance Offices shall hear of it!" said Grounsell, with a sternness that made the threat most significant.

"I 'll send for that man from Heidelberg at once, Sydney," said Lady Hester, as, pale with passion, she seated herself at her writing table.

"Take care what you do, Madam," said Grounsell, approaching where she sat, and speaking in a low and solemn voice. "Let not any feeling of displeasure with me induce you to an act of rashness — or imprudence. My old friend's state is critical; it may at any moment become dangerous. I am convinced that what I am doing offers the most reasonable hope of serving him. Take care lest you weaken his confidence in me, when he may not be prepared to repose it in another."

"Here, Sydney, you write German; and it is possible he may not read French. This is his name — I got it in Paris — Graëffnell. Tell him to come at once — in fact, let François take a carriage for him."

Sydney Onslow looked at her mother and then at the Doctor. At the latter her glance was almost imploring, but he never noticed it, turning abruptly toward the window without uttering a word.

"Can you consult with him, Doctor?" asked Sydney, timidly.

"Of course not; he 's a mountebank."

"Write, as I bade you, Miss Onslow," said Lady Hester. "Dr. Graëffnell is one of the first men in Germany. Lady Heskisson sent for him when the Earl fell ill at Wiesbaden."

"And the Countess was a widow in four days after. Don't forget the *dénouement* of the story, Madam."

Sydney dropped the pen, and her hands fell powerless to her side. There was something in the sternness of the Doctor that seemed to awe even Lady Onslow, for she made no reply; while Grounsell, seeing his advantage, left the room at once, without further parley.

Our readers will probably forgive us, if we follow his example, and not remain to listen to the eloquent monologue in which Lady Onslow lamented her sad condition in life. Not only did she bewail her destiny, but like one of those classic personages the Greek Chorus presents us to, she proceeded to speculate upon every possible mischance futurity might have in store for her, ingeniously inventing "situations," and devising "predicaments" that nothing less gifted than a self-tormenting imagination can conceive. Leaving her to all the pleasure such a pastime can give, we shall quit the house, and, although a cold, raw evening is closing in, wander out into the street.

CHAPTER V.

The Patient.

Along the dark and narrow street, over which the coming night cast a dreary shadow, a single lamp was seen to shine at the door of Ludwig Kraus, the apothecary; a beacon, it is but fair to add, lighted less with the hope of attracting custom, than in obedience to the requirement of the law, for Herr Kraus was a "state" official, and bound to conform to the dictates of the government. His shop was a small triangular space, in which there was barely room for the learned dispenser and a single client at the same moment, thus giving to all his interviews the secrecy of the confessional itself. Jars, phials, flasks, and drawers, rose on every side, not inscribed with the vulgar nomenclature of modern physic, but bearing the enigmatical marks and hieroglyphics known to Galen and Paracelsus. Arabic letters, dragons, strange monsters, and zodiacal signs, met the eye everywhere, and did not consort ill with the spare form and high bald head of the proprietor, whose quaint-figured dressing-gown and black velvet cap gave him a kind of resemblance to an alchemist in his workshop. As Grounsell approached the glass door and peeped in, the scene that presented itself rather assisted this illusion, for straight in front of the little counter over which Kraus was leaning, sat the dwarf, Hans Roëckle, talking away with considerable animation, and from time to time seeming to

expatiate upon the merits of a wooden figure which he held carefully in his hands. The small half-lighted chamber; the passive, motionless features of the chemist; the strange wild gestures of little Hans, as, in his tongue of mysterious gutturals, he poured out a flood of words, amazed Grounsell, and excited his curiosity to the utmost. He continued to gaze in for a considerable time, without being able to guess what it might mean, and at last abandoning all conjecture he resolved to enter. Scarcely had he touched the handle of the door, however, than the Dwarf seizing the figure, concealed it beneath the skirt of his fur mantle, and retired to a corner of the shop. Dr. Grounsell's errand was to obtain certain medicines for his patient, which, from his ignorance of German, he had taken the precaution to write down in Latin. He passed the paper in silence over the counter, and waited patiently as the chemist spelt out the words. Having read it through he handed back the paper with a few dry words, which being in his native tongue were totally incomprehensible.

"You must have these things, surely," exclaimed Grounsell; "they are the commonest of all medicines;" and then remembering himself he made signs in the direction of the drawers and phials to express his meaning. Again the chemist uttered some dozen words.

The Doctor produced his purse, where certain gold pieces glittered, as though to imply that he was willing to pay handsomely for his ignorance; but the other pushed it away, and shook his head in resolute refusal.

"This is too bad," muttered Grounsell, angrily. "I'll be sworn he has the things, and will not give them." The chemist motioned Hans to approach, and

whispered a few words in his hearing, on which the Dwarf, removing his cap in courteous salutation, addressed Grounsell: "High-born and much-learned Saar. De laws make no oder that doctoren have recht to write physics."

"What!" cried Grounsell, not understanding the meaning of the speech. Hans repeated it, more slowly, and at length succeeded in conveying the fact, that Physicians alone were qualified to procure medicines.

"But I am a doctor, my worthy friend, a physician of long standing."

"Dass ist possible — who knows?"

"I know, and I say it," rejoined the other, tersely.

"Ja! ja!" responded Hans, as though to say the theme were not worth being warm about, one way or t'other.

"Come, my dear Sir," said Grounsell coaxingly; "pray be good enough to explain that I want these medicines for a sick friend, who is now at the hotel here, dangerously ill of gout."

"Podagra — gout!" exclaimed Hans, with sudden animation, "and dese are de cure for gout."

"They will, I hope, be of service against it."

"You shall have dem — Saar — on one condition. That ist, you will visit anoder sick man mit gout — an Englessman, too — vehr ill — vehr sick; — and no rich — you understan."

"Yes, yes; I understand perfectly. I'll see him with pleasure. Tell this worthy man to make up these for me, and I'll go along with you now."

"Gut! verh good," said Hans, as in a few words of German he explained to the apothecary that he might venture to transgress the law in the present

case when the season was over, and no one to be the wiser.

As Hans issued forth to show the way, he never ceased to insist upon the fact that the present was not a case for a fee, and that the Doctor should well understand the condition upon which his visit was to be paid; and still inveighing on this theme, he arrived at the house where the Daltons dwelt. "Remember, too," said Hans, "that though they are poor, they are of guten stamm — how say you, noble?" Grounsell listened with due attention to all Hanserl's cautions, following, not without difficulty, his strange and guttural utterances.

"I will go before. Stay here," said Hans, as they gained the landing-place; and so saying he pushed open the door and disappeared.

As Grounsell stood alone and in the dark, he wondered within himself what strange chances should have brought a fellow-countryman into this companionship, for there was something so grotesque in Hans' appearance and manner, that it routed all notion of his being admitted to any footing of friendly equality.

The door at length opened, and the Doctor followed Hans into a dimly-lighted room, where Dalton lay, half dressed, upon his bed. Before Grounsell had well passed the entrance, the sick man said, "I am afraid, Sir, that my little friend here has taken a bit of liberty with both of us, since I believe you wanted a patient just as little as I did a doctor."

The anxious, lustrous eye, the flushed cheek, and tremulous lip of the speaker, gave, at the same time, a striking contradiction to his words. Grounsell's

practised glance read these signs rapidly, and drawing near the bed, he seated himself beside it, saying, "It is quite clear, Sir, that you are not well, and although, if we were both of us in our own country, this visit of mine would, as you observe, be a considerable liberty, seeing that we are in a foreign land, I hope you will not deem my intrusion of this nature, but suffer me, if I can, to be of some service to you."

Less the words themselves than a certain purpose-like kindliness in the speaker's manner, induced Dalton to accept the offer, and reply to the questions which the other proposed to him. "No, no, Doctor," said he, after a few moments; "there is no great mischief brewing, after all. The truth is, I was fretted — harassed a little. It was about a boy of mine — I have only one — and he 's gone away to be a soldier with the Austrians. You know, of course — as who doesn't? — how hard it is to do anything for a young man now-a-days. If family or high connexion could do it, we 'd be as well off as our neighbours. We belong to the Daltons of Garrigmore, that you know are full blood with the O'Neals of Cappagh. But what 's the use of blood now? — devil a good it does a man. It would be better to have your father a cotton-spinner, or an iron-master than the descendant of Shane Mohr na Manna."

"I believe you are right," observed the Doctor, drily.

"I know I am; I feel it myself, and I 'm almost ashamed to tell it. Here am I, Peter Dalton, the last of them now; and may I never leave this bed, if I could make a barony constable in the county where the king's writ couldn't run once without our leave."

"But Ireland herself has changed more than your own fortunes," remarked Grounsell.

"That's true — that's true," sighed the sick man. "I don't remember the best days of it, but I've heard of them often and often from my father. The fine old times, when Mount Dalton was filled with company from the ground to the slates, and two lords in the granary; a pipe of port wine in the hall, with a silver cup beside it; the Modereen hounds, huntsmen and all, living at rack and manger, as many as fifty sitting down in the parlour, and I won't say how many in the servants' hall; the finest hunters in the west country in the stables — there was life for you! Show me the equal of that in the wide world."

"And what is the present condition of the scene of these festivities?" said Grounsell, with a calm, but searching look.

"The present condition?" echoed Dalton, starting up to a sitting posture, and grasping the curtain with a convulsive grip; "I can't tell you what it is to-day, this ninth of November, but I'll tell what it was when I left it, eighteen years ago. The house was a ruin; the lawn a common; the timber cut down; the garden a waste; the tenants beggared; the landlord an exile. That's a pleasant catalogue, isn't it?"

"But there must come a remedy for all this," remarked Grounsell, whose ideas were following out a very different channel.

"Do you mean by a poor-law? Is it by taxing the half ruined to feed the lazy? or by rooting out all that once was a gentry, to fill their places by greedy speculators from Manchester and Leeds? Is that your

remedy? It's wishing it well I am! No; if you want to do good to the country, leave Ireland to be Ireland, and don't try to make Norfolk of her. Let her have her own Parliament, that knows the people and their wants. Teach her to have a pride in her own nationality, and not to be always looking at herself in shame beside her rich sister. Give her a word of kindness now and then as you do the Scotch; but, above all, leave us to ourselves. We understand one another; you never did, nor never will. We quarrelled, and made friends again, and all went right with us. You came over with your Chancery Courts, and your police, and whenever we differed you never stopped till we were beggared or hanged."

"You take a very original view of our efforts at civilisation, I confess," said Grounsell, smiling.

"Civilisation! Civilisation! I hate the very sound of the word. It brings to my mind nothing but county gaols, bridewells, turnpikes, and ministers' money. If it wasn't for civilisation, would there be a receiver over my estate of Mount Dalton? would the poor tenants be racked for the rent, that I always gave time for? would there be a big poor-house, with its ugly front staring to the highway, as they tell me there is, and a police barrack to keep it company, opposite? I tell you again, Sir, that your meddling has done nothing but mischief. Our little quarrels you converted into serious animosities; our estrangements into the feuds of two opposing races; our very poverty, that we had grown accustomed to, you taught us to regard as a national disgrace, without ever instructing us how to relieve it; and there we are now on your hands — neither English in industry, nor Irish in

submission — neither willing to work, nor content to be hungry!"

The Doctor saw by the agitated look and tone of the sick man that the subject was one of too much excitement for him, and hastened to change the topic by jocularly expressing a hope that he might prove more successful with him than England had been with his countrymen.

"I doubt it, Sir," said Dalton, gravely; "not thanking you the less for your kindness. I believe, like my poor country, that I 'm past doctoring." He paused for a few seconds, and then added: "It 's all fretting. It 's thinking about the girls; Frank there is no fear of. That 's what ails me."

Grounsell saw that to prolong his visit would be but to encourage a tone of depression that must prove injurious; so promising to return to see him in the morning, he shook Dalton's hand cordially, and followed Hans into the adjoining room, where writing materials were prepared for him.

The two girls were standing at the fire as he entered; and simple as was their dress, homely even to poverty, every trait of their costume, their looks, bespoke them of gentle blood. Their anxious glances as he came forward showed their eagerness to hear his tidings; but they did not speak a word.

"Do not be uneasy, young ladies," said he, hastening to relieve their fears. "Your father's illness has nothing serious about it. A few days will, I trust, see him perfectly restored to health. Meanwhile, you are his best physicians, who can minister to his spirits and cheer him up."

"Since my brother left us, Sir, he appeared to sink hour by hour; he cannot get over the shock," said Ellen.

"I never knew him to give way before," interposed Kate. "He used to say when anything grieved him, 'he 'd pay some one to fret for him.' "

"With better health you 'll see his old courage return," said the Doctor, as he hastily wrote a few lines of prescription, and then laying his head in his hand seemed for some minutes lost in thought. There were little comforts, matters of trifling luxury, he wished to order and yet he hesitated, for he did not know how far they were compatible with their means; nor could he venture upon the hazard of offending by questioning them. As in his uncertainty he raised his eyes, they fell upon the wooden figure which the Dwarf had exhibited in the apothecary's shop, and which now stood upon a table near. It was a child sleeping at the foot of a cross, around which its arms were entwined. The emaciated limbs and wasted cheek portrayed fasting and exhaustion, while in the attitude itself, sleep seemed verging upon death.

"What is that?" asked he hastily, as he pointed with his pen to the object.

"A poor child was found thus, frozen to death upon the Arlberg," said Kate; "and my sister carved that figure from a description of the event."

"Your sister! This was done by *you?*" said Grounsell slowly, as he turned his gaze from the work to the artist.

"Yes," cried Hans, whose face beamed with delight; "is it not 'lieblich;' is it not vonderful. Dass,

I say, alway; none have taste now — none have de love to admire!"

Stooping down to examine it better, Grounsell was struck by the expression of the face, whereon a smile of trustfulness and hope seemed warring with the rigid lines of coming death; so that the impression conveyed was more of a victory over suffering, than of a terrible fate.

"She is self-taught, Sir; none even so much as assisted her by advice," said Kate, proudly.

"That will be perhaps but too apparent from my efforts," said Ellen, smiling faintly.

"I'm no artist, young lady," said Grounsell, bluntly, "but I am well versed in every variety of the human expression in suffering; and of mere truth to nature, I can speak confidently. This is a fine work! nay — do not blush. I am not a flatterer. May I take it with me, and show it to others more conversant with art than I am."

"Upon one condition you may," said the girl in a low deep voice.

"Be it so; on any condition you wish."

"We are agreed then?"

"Perfectly."

"The figure is yours — nay Sir — Your promise!"

Grounsell stammered and blushed, and looked confused; indeed no man was less able to extricate himself from any position of embarassment, and here the difficulties pressed on every side, for while he scrupled to accept what he deemed a gift of real value, he felt

that they too had a right to free themselves from the obligation that his presence as a doctor imposed. At last he saw nothing better than to yield; and in all the confusion of a bashfully awkward man, he mumbled out his acknowledgments, and catching up the figure departed.

Hans alone seemed dissatisfied at the result, for as he cast his wistful looks after the wooden image, his eyes swam with his tears, and he muttered as he went some words of deep desponding cadence.

CHAPTER VI.

A First Visit.

The dreary weather of November showed no signs of "taking up." Lowering days of fog and gloom alternated with cold winds and sleet, so that all out-door occupation was utterly denied to that imprisoned party, who were left with so few resources to pass the time within. It is true they did not make the best of the bad. Lady Hester grew hourly more irritable and peevish. Sydney Onslow seldom left her room. George took to the hills every morning, and never returned before a late dinner; while the Doctor, when not with Sir Stafford, spent all his time at the Daltons, with whom he had already established a close intimacy.

Lady Hester had exhausted every possible means she could imagine to while away the hours; she had spent whole days in letter writing — folios of "tirades," to every one she could think of. She had all the carriages inspected, and the imperials searched, for books she well knew had been left behind. She had sent for the landlord's daughter to give her lessons in German, which she thought of learning during the week. She had given a morning to the Italian boy with his white mice; and pored for hours long over the "Livre des Voyageurs," reading the names of friends who with better fortune had taken their departure for Italy. But at last there came an end even to these frail resources, and she was left utterly without an occupation to en-

gage, or even a thought to employ her. The five minutes of morning altercation with Grounsell over, the dreary time was unbroken by a single event, or unchequered by a single hope. Sir Stafford was indeed recovering, but so slowly that weeks might be required 'ere he could proceed on his journey. How were they to be passed, was the fearful question to which she could find no answer. She looked with actual envy at the party of boors who played at dominos in the beer-house opposite, and followed with longing eyes the little mailcart as it left the village. If she could read German, there were scores of books at her service. If she could but take a charitable turn, there was poverty enough to give her occupation from morn till night. She never knew what it was to think seriously; for meditation is the manufacture that cannot work without its raw material, and with this her mind was not stored.

It was in this pitiable frame of mind she was walking up and down the drawing-room one morning just as the Doctor had taken his departure, and with him the last little scene that was to relieve the day, when the servant entered with the card of Colonel Haggerstone, and the daily repeated inquiry for Sir Stafford's health.

Had the gallant Colonel presented himself at Wilton Crescent, or the Villa, it is more than likely that the well-instructed porter had not viséd his passport, but at once consigned a name of such unimposing consonants to gentle obscurity, while such an entry in the visiting book had been coolly set down as a mistake. Not so now, however. Lady Hester took up the card, and, instead of the habitual curt rejoinder — "Sir

Stafford is better," said, "You may tell Colonel Haggerstone that Lady Hester will receive him."

The gallant Colonel, who was negligently slapping his boots with his riding whip below stairs, was not a little amazed at the message. There had been a time when he would have interpreted the favour most flatteringly. He would have whispered to himself "she has seen me passing the window — she was struck with me as I rode by." Time had, however, toned down these bright illusions, and he read the permission with a nearer approach to truth, as a fine lady caprice in a moment of "ennui." "I thought as much," muttered he to himself as he slowly ascended the stairs; "the blockade was too strictly enforced not to tell at last. No newspapers, no books, ha! ha! Couldn't help surrendering!"

The Colonel had by this time given his whiskers and moustaches the last curl, thrown back his head into a position of calm dignity as the servant, throwing wide the folding doors, announced him. Advancing two paces and bowing low, Colonel Haggerstone said, "Your Ladyship will pardon the liberty, the very great liberty, I have taken in my respectful inquiries for some days past, but although probably not remembered by Sir Stafford, I once *did* enjoy the honour of his acquaintance — we met at Lord Kerrison's in Scotland."

Lady Onslow cut short this very uninteresting explanation by a bland but somewhat supercilious smile, that seemed to say, "What possible matter can it be," while at the same time she motioned to him to be seated.

"May I hope that Sir Stafford continues to improve," said he, bowing again.

"He 's better to-day," said Lady Onslow, languidly. "Perhaps as well as any one can be in this wretched place. You heard, I suppose, of the series of misfortunes that befel us, and compelled us to return here."

The Colonel looked mildly compassionate and inquisitive. He anticipated the possible pleasure her Ladyship might feel in a personal narrative, and he was an accomplished listener. This time, however, he was wrong. Lady Onslow either did not think the occasion or the audience worth the trouble of the exertion, and merely said, "Whe had a break down somewhere with an odious name. Sir Stafford would travel by that road through the Höhlen Thal, where somebody made his famous march. Who was it?"

"Massena, I think," said the Colonel at a haphazard, thinking that at least the name was *ben trovato*, just as Sunday-school children father everything remarkable on "John the Baptist."

"Oh dear, no, it was Moreau. We stopped to breakfast at the little inn where he held his head quarters, and in the garden of which he amused himself in pistol-shooting — strange, was it not? Are you a good shot, Colonel?"

"Good among bad ones," said the Colonel, modestly.

"Then we must have a match. I am so fond of it. You have pistols of course?"

"I am fortunate enough to have a case of Schlessingers best, and at your Ladyship's disposal."

"Well, that is agreed upon. You 'll be kind enough to select a suitable spot in the garden, and if to-mor-

row be fine — by the way, what is to-morrow; — not Sunday, I hope."

The Colonel relieved her anxieties by the assurance that the next day would be Monday, consequently that the present one was Sunday.

"How strange! One does make sad confusion in these things abroad," said she, sighing. "I think we are better in England in that respect, don't you?"

The question was not a very clear one, but the Colonel never hesitated to give in his adhesion.

"Sir Stafford always took that view in the House, and consequently differed from his party, as well as about Ireland. Poor dear Ireland! what is to be done for her?"

This was a rather more embarrassing demand than the previous one, and the Colonel hemmed and coughed, and prepared for a speech of subtle generalities; but the dexterity was all unnecessary, for her Ladyship had already forgotten the theme, and everything about it, as she went on. "How I pity those dear Wreckingtons, who are condemned to live there. The Earl, you know, had promised solemnly that he would go any lengths for the party when he got his blue riband; and so they took him at his word, and actually named him to the Viceroyalty. It was a very cruel thing, but I hear nothing could be better than his conduct on hearing it: and dear Lady Wreckington insisted upon accompanying him. It was exactly like the story of — what 's that man's name, who assisted in the murder of the Emperor Paul — Geroboffskoi, or something like that, and whose wife followed him to the mines."

The Colonel avowed that the cases were precisely alike, and now the conversation — if the word can be

degraded to mean that bald disjointed chat — ran upon London people and events — their marriages, their dinners, their separations, coalitions, divorces, and departures; on all which themes Haggerstone affected a considerable degree of knowledge, although, to any one less occupied with themselves than her Ladyship, it would have been at once apparent that all his information was derived from the newspapers. It was at the close of a lamentation on the utter stupidity of everything and everywhere, that he adroitly asked where she meant to pass the winter.

"I wish I knew," said she, languidly. "The Dollingtons say Naples; the Upsleys tell us Rome; and, for my part, I pronounce for neither. Lady Dollington is my aversion, and the three Upsley girls, with their pink noses and red hair, are insufferable."

"What does your Ladyship think of Florence?" asked the Colonel, soothingly.

"Pretty much what I might of one of the Tonga islands. I know nothing of the place, the people, or the climate. Pray tell me about it."

"There is very little to say," said Haggerstone, shrugging his shoulders; "not but the place might be very agreeable, if there were some one of really fashionable standing to take the lead and give a tone to the society; some one who would unite indisputable rank and wealth with personal graces, and thus, as it were, by prescriptive right, assume the first place. Then, I say, Florence would be second to no city of Italy. Would that your Ladyship would condescend to accept the vacant throne!"

"I!" said she, affecting astonishment; and then laughingly added: "Oh, no! I detest mock sovereignty.

I actually sudder at the idea of the Lady Patroness part; besides, whom should one have to reign over? Not the Browns, and Smiths, and Perkinses; not the full-pensioned East Indians, the half-pay Colonels, and the no-pay Irish gentilities, that form the staple of small city society. You surely would not recommend me to such a sad pre-eminence."

The Colonel smiled flatteringly at her Ladyship's smartness, and hastened to assure her that such heresy was far from his thoughts; and then with a practised readiness ran over a list of foreign celelebrities — French, Russian, and German — whose names, at least, clinked like the true metal.

This looked promisingly; it was very like cutting all English society, and had the appearance of something very exclusive, very impertinent, and very ungenerous; and now, she lent a willing ear as Haggerstone revealed a plan of operations for a whole winter campaign. According to his account, it was a perfect "terra incognita," where the territorial limits and laws might be laid down at will: it was a state which called for a great Dictatorship, and the sway of unlimited authority.

Now, Lady Hester had never, at least since her marriage, and very rarely even before it, been more than on the periphery of fashionable society. When she did obtain a footing within the charmed circle, it was by no prescriptive right, but rather on some ground of patronage, or some accidental political crisis, which made Sir Stafford's influence a matter of moment. There was, therefore, a flattery in the thought of thus becoming a leader in society; and she shrewdly remembered, that though there might be little real

power, there would be all the tyranny of a larger sovereignty.

It is true, she suffered no symptom of this satisfaction to escape her; on the contrary, she compassionated the "poor dear things" that thought themselves "the world," in such a place, and smiled with angelic pity at their sweet simplicity; but Haggerstone saw through all these disguises, and read her real sentiments, as a practised toad-eater never fails to do, where only affectation is the pretence. Adroitly avoiding to press the question, he adverted to Baden and its dreary weather; offered his books; his newspapers; his horses; his phaëton; and everything that was his, even his companionship as a guide to the best riding or walking roads, and, like a clever actor, made his exit at the very moment when his presence became most desirable.

Lady Hester looked out of the window and saw, in the street beneath, the saddle-horses of the Colonel, which were led up and down, by a groom in the most accurate of costumes. The nags themselves, too, were handsome and in top condition. It was a little gleam of civilisation, in the midst of universal barrenness, that brought up memories, some of which at least were not devoid of pain, so far as the expression of her features might be trusted. "I wonder who he can be," said she musing. "It 's a shocking name! Haggerstone. Perhaps Sir Stafford may remember him. It 's very sad to think that one should be reduced to such people," so, with a slight sigh, she sat down to indulge in a mood of deep and sincere commiseration for herself and her sorrows.

From these reveries she was aroused by the ar-

rival of a package of books and papers from the Colonel. They included some of the latest things of the day, both French and English, and were exactly the kind of reading she cared for, that half-gossipry that revolves around a certain set, and busies itself about the people and incidents of one very small world. There were books of travel by noble authors, and novels by titled authoresses; the one, as tamely well-bred and tiresome as, the others, were warm and impassioned — no bad corroborative evidence, by the way, of the French maxim, that the "safety of the Lady Georginas has an immense relation to the coldness of the Lord Georges." There were books of beauty, wherein loveliness was most aristocratic; and annuals where nobility condescended to write twaddle. There were analyses of new operas, wherein the list of the spectators was the only matter of interest, and better than these were the last fashions of "Longchamps," the newest bulletins of that great campaign which began in Adam's garden, and will endure to the "very crack of doom."

Lady Hester's spirits rallied at once from these well-timed stimulants; and when the party gathered together before dinner, George and his sister were amazed at the happy change in her manner.

"I have had a visitor," said she, after a short mystification; "a certain Colonel, who assumes to be known to your father, but I fancy will scarcely be remembered by him — he calls himself Haggerstone."

"Haggerstone!" said George, repeating the name twice or thrice. "Is not that the name of the man

who was always with Arlington, and of whom all the stories are told?"

"As I never heard of Arlington's companion, nor the stories in question, I can't say. Pray enlighten us," said Lady Hester, tartly.

"Haggerstone sounds so like the name," repeated George to himself.

"So like what name? Do be good enough to explain."

"I am unwilling to tell a story which, if not justly attributale to the man, will certainly attach unpleasantly to his name hereafter."

"And in your excessive caution for yourself, you are pleased to forget *me*, Mr. Onslow. Pray remember that if I admit him to acquaintance —"

"But surely you don't mean to do so?"

"And why not?"

"In the first place, you know nothing about him."

"Which is *your* fault."

"Be it so. I have at least told you enough to inspire reserve and caution."

"Quite enough to suggest curiosity and give a degree of interest to a very commonplace character."

"Is he young, may I ask?" said George, with a half smile.

"No; far from it."

"Good looking?"

"Just as little."

"Very agreeable and well-mannered?"

"Rather prosy, and too military in tone for my taste."

"Does he come under the recommendatory 'firman' of any dear friend or acquaintance?"

"Nothing of the kind. There is his passport," said she, pointing to his visiting ticket.

"Your Ladyship used to be more difficult of access," said George, dryly.

"Very true; and so I may possibly become, again. To make selections from the world of one's acquaintance is a very necessary duty; but, as my father used to say, no one thinks of using a sieve for chaff."

"This gentleman is then fortunate in his obscurity."

"Here comes Miss Onslow," said Lady Hester, "who will probably be more grateful to me, when she learns that our solitude is to be enlivened by the gallant Colonel."

Sydney scanned over the books and journals on the table, and then quietly remarked, "If a man is to be judged of by his associates, these do not augur very favourably for the gentleman's taste."

"I see that you are both bent on making him a favourite of mine," said Lady Hester, pettishly; "and if Doctor Grounsell will only discover some atrocious circumstance in his history or character, I shall be prepared to call him 'charming.'"

The announcement of dinner fortunately broke up a discussion that already promised unfavourably; nor were any of the party sorry at the interruption.

CHAPTER VII.

A Lesson in Pistol Shooting.

THERE are two great currents which divide public opinion in the whole world, and all mankind may be classed into one or other of these wide categories — "The people who praise, and the people who abuse everything." In certain sets, all is as it ought to be, in this life. Everybody is good, dear, and amiable. All the men are gifted and agreeable; all the women fascinating and pretty. An indiscriminate shower of laudations falls upon everything of everybody, and the only surprise the hearer feels is how a world, so chuck full of excellence, can possibly consist with what one reads occasionally in the *Times* and the *Chronicle*.

The second category is the Roland to this Oliver, and embraces those who have a good word for nobody, and in whose estimation the Globe is one great penal settlement — the overseers being neither more nor less than the best-conducted among the convicts. The chief business of these people in life is to chronicle family disgraces and misfortunes, to store their memories with defalcations, frauds, suicides, disreputable transactions at play, unfair duels, seductions, and the like, and to be always prepared, on the first mention of a name, to connect its owner, or his grandmother, with some memorable blot, or some unfortunate event of years before. If the everlasting

laudations of the one set make life too sweet to be wholesome, the eternal disparagement of the other renders it too bitter to be enjoyable; nor would it be easy to say whether society suffers more from the exercise of this mock charity, on the one side, or the practice of universal malevolence, on the other.

Perhaps our readers will feel grateful when we assure them that we are not intent upon pushing the investigation further. The consideration was forced upon us by thinking of Colonel Haggerstone, who was a distinguished member of class No. 2. His mind was a police sheet, or rather like a page of that celebrated "Livre Noir," wherein all the unexpiated offences of a nation are registered. He knew the family disasters of all Europe, and not a name could be mentioned in society to which he could not tag either a seduction, a fraud, a swindle, or a poltroonery; and when such revelations are given prosaically, with all the circumstances of date, time, and place, unrelieved by the slightest spice of wit or imagination, but simply narrated as "Memoires pour servir à l'Histoire" of an individual, the world is very apt to accept them as evidences of knowledge of life, rather than what they really are — proofs of a malignant disposition. In this way Haggerstone seemed to many, the mere "old soldier" and nothing more; whereas, if nature had given him either fancy or epigrammatic smartness, he would have been set down for the incarnation of slander.

It may seem strange that Lady Hester, who had lived a good deal in the world, should never have met a character of this type, but so it was; she belonged to a certain "fast set" in society, who seem to ask

for a kind of indemnity for all they do, by never, on any occasion, stopping to criticise their neighbours. This semblance of good nature is a better defensive armour than the uninitiated know of, enlisting all loose sympathies with its possessor, and even gaining for its advocates that great floating majority who speak much and think little.

In London, Haggerstone would have at once appeared the very "worst ton," and she would have avoided the acquaintance of a man so unhappily gifted; but here, at Baden, with nothing to do, none to speak to, he became actually a prize, and she listened to him for hours with pleasure as he recounted all the misdeeds of those "dear, dear friends" who had made up her own "world." There was at heart, too, the soothing flattery that whispered, "He can say nothing of *me;* the worst he can hint is, that I married a man old enough to be my father, and if I did, I am heartily sorry for the mistake."

He was shrewd enough soon to detect the family differences that prevailed, and to take advantage of them, not by any imprudent or ill-advised allusion to what would have enlisted her Ladyship's pride in opposition, but, by suggesting occupations and amusements, that he saw would be distasteful to the others, and thus alienate her more and more from their companionship. In fact his great object was to make Lady Hester a disciple of that new school which owns Georges Sand for its patron, and calls itself "Lionne." It would be foreign to our purpose here were we to stop and seek to what social causes this new sect owes existence. In a great measure it may be traced to the prevailing taste of men for club life — to that

lounging ease which exacts no tribute of respect or even attention, but suffers men to indulge their caprices to any extent of selfishness; thus unfitting them for ladies' society, or only such society as that of ladies condescending enough to unsex themselves, and to talk upon themes and discuss subjects that usually are reserved for other audiences.

Certain clever men liked this liberty — these receptions were a kind of free port, where all could be admitted duty free. Nothing was forbidden in this wide tariff, and so, conversation, emancipated from the restriction of better society, permitted a thousand occasions of display, that gradually attracted people to these reunions, and made all other society appear cold, formal, and hypocritical by contrast. This new invention had not reached England when Lady Hester quitted it, but she listened to a description of its merits with considerable interest. There were many points, too, in which it chimed in with her notions. It had novelty, liberty, and unbounded caprice amongst its recommendations; and lastly, it was certain to outrage the "Onslows." It was a "part" which admitted of any amount of interpolations. Under its sanction she would be free to say anything, know any one, and go anywhere. Blessed immunity that permitted all and denied nothing!

With all the vulgar requirements of "Lionism" she was already sufficiently conversant. She could ride, drive, shoot, and fence; was a very tolerable billiard player, and could row a little. But with the higher walks of the craft she had made no acquaintance; she had not learned to swim, had never smoked, and was in dark ignorance of that form of language which, half

mystical and all-mischievous, is in vogue with the members of this sect. That she could acquire all these things rapidly and easily the Colonel assured her, and, by way of "matriculating," reminded her of her challenge respecting the pistol shooting, for which he had made every preparation in the garden of the hotel.

True to his word, he had selected a very pretty alley, at the end of which rose a wall sufficiently high to guard against accidents from stray shots. On a table were displayed, in all the dandyism such objects are capable of, a handsome case of pistols, with all the varied appliances of kid leather for wadding, bullet-moulds, rammers, hammers, screws, and rests, even to a russia-leather bound note-book, to record the successes, nothing had been forgotten; and Lady Hester surveyed with pleasure preparations which at least implied an anxious attention to her wishes.

"Only fancy the barbarism of the land we live in," said he; "I have sent emissaries on every side to seek for some of those plaster figures so common in every city of Europe, but in vain. Instead of your Ladyship cutting off Joan of Arc's head, or sending your bullet through some redoubtable enemy of England, you must waste your prowess and skill upon an ignoble jar of porcelain, or a vase of Bohemian glass; unless, indeed, my last messenger shall have proved more fortunate, and I believe such is the case." As he spoke his servant came up with a small parcel carefully enveloped in paper.

"I have got this figure, Sir," said he, "with the greatest difficulty, and only indeed by pretending we wanted it as an ornamental statue. The little fellow

of the toy-shop parted with it in tears, as if it had been his brother."

"It is very beautiful!" said Lady Hester, as she surveyed a small wooden statue of Goethe's "Marguerite," in the attitude of plucking the petals of a flower to decide upon her lover's fidelity.

"A mere toy!" said Haggerstone. "These things are carved by every child in the Black Forest. Does your Ladyship think you could hit the feather of her cap without hurting the head?"

"I couldn't think of such profanation," replied she; "there is really something very pretty in the attitude and expression. Pray let us reserve her for some less terrible destiny."

But the Colonel persisted in assuring her that these were the commonest nick-nacks that adorned every peasant's cabin — that every boor with a rusty knife carved similar figures, and in the midst of his explanations he placed the statue upon a little stone pillar about twenty paces off.

Lady Hester's objection had been little more than a caprice; indeed, had she been convinced that the figure was a valuable work of art, she would have felt rather flattered than otherwise at the costliness of the entertainment provided for her. Like Cleopatra's pearl it would have had the charm of extravagance at least; but she never gave the Colonel credit for such gallantry, and the more readily believed all he said on the subject.

Colonel Haggerstone proceeded to load the pistols with all that pomp and circumstance so amusingly displayed by certain people on like occasions. The bullets encased in little globes of chamois, carefully

powdered with emery, were forced down the barrels by a hammer, the hair trigger adjusted, and the weapon delivered to Lady Hester with due solemnity.

"If I go wide of the mark, Colonel, I beg you to remember that I have not had a pistol in my hand for above three years; indeed, it must be nearly four years since I shot a match with Lord Norwood."

"Lord Norwood! indeed," said Haggerstone. "I wasn't aware that your Ladyship had ever been his antagonist."

Had not Lady Hester been herself anxious to hide the confusion the allusion to the Viscount always occasioned her, she could not have failed to remark how uncomfortably astonished was Haggerstone at the mention of that name. Nervously eager to do something — anything that might relieve her embarrassment — she pulled the trigger; but the aim was an erring one, and no trace of the bullet to be seen.

"There 's no use in looking for it, Colonel Haggerstone," said she, pettishly; "I'm certain I was very wide of the mark."

"I 'm positive I saw the plaster drop from the wall somewhere here abouts," said the complaisant Colonel, pointing to a spot close beside the figure. "Yes, and the twigs are broken here."

"No matter; I certainly missed, and that 's quite enough. I told you I should, before I fired; and when one has the anticipation of failure, it is so easy to vindicate the impression."

It was in evident chagrin at her want of success that she spoke, and all her companion's flatteries went for nothing. Meanwhile, he presented the second pistol, which, taking hastily, and without giving her-

self time for an aim, she discharged with a like result.

"I 'll not try again," said she, pettishly. "Either the pistols don't suit me, or the place or the light is bad. Something is wrong, that 's certain.

Haggerstone bit his lip in silence, and went on reloading the pistols without trusting himself to reply. A little conflict was going on within him, and all his intended flatteries for her Ladyship were warring with the desire to display his own skill, for he was a celebrated shot, and not a little vain of the accomplishment. Vanity carried the day at last, and, taking up the weapon, he raised it slowly to a level with his eye. A second or two he held it thus, his hand steady as a piece of marble.

"I have taken my aim, and now you may give the word for me to fire when you please," said he, turning his eyes from the object, and looking straight at Lady Hester.

She stared at him as if to reassure herself of the direction of his glance, and then called out "Fire!" The shot rang out clear and sharp; with it arose a shrill cry of agony, and straight before them, at the foot of the pillar, lay something which looked like a roll of clothes, only that by its panting motion it indicated life. Haggerstone sprang forward, and to his horror discovered the Dwarf, Hans Roëckle, who, with his arm broken, lay actually bathed in blood. With his remaining hand he clasped the little statue to his bosom, while he muttered to himself the words "gerettet — saved! saved!"

While Lady Hester hurried for assistance, Haggerstone bound up the bleeding vessels with his handker-

chief; and in such German as he could command, asked how the accident had befallen.

A few low muttering sounds were all the Dwarf uttered, but he kissed the little image with a devotion that seemed like insanity. Meanwhile the Colonel's servant coming up, at once recognised Hans, and exclaimed, "It is the little fellow of the toy-shop, Sir. I told you with what reluctance he parted with this figure. He must be mad, I think."

The wild looks and eager expressions of the Dwarf, as he clutched the image and pressed it to his heart, seemed to warrant the suspicion; and Haggerstone thought he could read insanity in every line of the poor creature's face. To the crowd that instantaneously gathered around the inn door, and which included many of his friends and acquaintances, Hans would give no other explanation of the event than that it was a mere accident; that he was passing, and received the shot by chance; nothing more.

"Is he not mad, or a fool?" asked Haggerstone of the innkeeper.

"Neither, Sir; Hans Roëckle is an old and respected burgher of our town, and although eccentric and odd in his way, is not wanting for good sense or good nature."

"Ay, ay!" cried two or three of his townsfolk, to whom the landlord translated the Colonel's question; "Hans is a kind-hearted fellow, and if he loves his dolls and wooden images over much, he never lacks in affection for living creatures."

While these and such like observations were making around him, the Dwarf's wounds were being dressed by his friend Ludwig Kraus, an operation of con-

siderable pain, that the little fellow bore with heroic tranquillity. Not a word of complaint, not a syllable of impatience escaped him, and while from his half-closed lips a low muttered exclamation of "Saved! saved!" came forth from time to time, the bystanders deemed it the utterance of gratitude for his own escape with life.

But once only did any expression of irritation burst from him. It was when Haggerstone pulled out his purse, and with an ostentatious display of munificence asked him to name his recompense. "Take me home; take me hence!" said Hans, impatiently. "Tell the rich 'Englander,' that there are wounds for which sorrow would be an ample cure, but there are others which insult is sure to fester."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Night Excursion.

The remainder of the day after the Dwarf's misfortune was passed by Lady Hester in a state of feverish irritability. Sorry as she felt for the "sad accident" — her own phrase, she was still more grieved for the effects it produced upon herself: the jar and worry of excited feelings — the uncomfortableness of being anxious about anything or anybody.

Epicurean in her code of manners as of morals, she detested whatever occasioned even a passing sensation of dissatisfaction, and hence upon the luckless Colonel, the author of the present evil, fell no measured share of her displeasure. "He should have taken precautions against such a mishap — he ought to have had sufficient presence of mind to have arrested his aim — he should have fired in the air — in fact, he ought to have done anything but what he did do;" which was, to agitate the nerves, and irritate the sensibilities, of a fine lady.

The conduct of the family, too, was the very reverse of soothing. Sir Stafford's gout had relapsed on hearing of the event. George Onslow's anger was such that he could not trust himself to speak of the occurrence; and as for Sydney, though full of sorrow for the Dwarf, she had not a single sympathy to bestow upon her stepmother. "Were there ever such people?" she asked herself again and again. Not

one had taken the trouble to ask how *she* bore up, or express the slightest anxiety for the consequences the shock might occasion *her*.

Grounsell was actually insufferable; and even hinted that if anything untoward were to happen, the very grave question might arise as to the guilt of the parties who appeared in arms without a Government permission. He reminded her ladyship that they were not in England; but in a land beset with its own peculiar prejudices and notions, and in nothing so rigorous as in the penalties on accidents that took their origin in illegality.

As for the wound itself, he informed her that the bullet had "traversed the deltoid, but without dividing "the brachial artery; and, for the present, sympathetic "fever and subcutaneous inflammation would be the "worst consequences." These tidings were neither very re-assuring nor intelligible; but all her cross-examination could elicit little better.

"Has Colonel Haggerstone been to see him?" asked she.

"No, Madam. His groom called with a present of two florins."

"Oh! impossible, Sir."

"Perfectly true, Madam. I was present when the money was returned to the man by a young lady, whose attentions to the sufferer saved him the pain this indignity would have cost him."

"A young lady, did you say? How does he happen to be so fortunate in his attendance?"

"Her father chances to be this poor creature's tenant, and many mutual acts of kindness have passed between them."

"Not even scandal could asperse her motives in the present case," said Lady Hester, with an insolent laugh. "It looked hardly human when they lifted it from the ground."

"Scandal has been guilty of as gross things, Madam," said Grounsell, sternly, "but I would defy her here, although there is beauty enough to excite all her malevolence." And with this speech, delivered with a pointedness there was no mistaking, the Doctor left the room.

Impressions, or what she herself would have called "feelings," chased each other so rapidly through Lady Hester's mind, that her whole attention was now directed to the young lady of whom Grounsell spoke, and whose singular charity excited all her curiosity. There is a strange tendency to imitation among those whose intelligences lie unexercised by any call of duty or necessity. No suggestion coming from within, they look without themselves for occupation and amusement. Lady Hester was a prominent disciple of this school. All her life she had been following, eager to see whether the fashions that became, or the pleasures that beguiled others, might not suit herself. If such a course of existence inevitably conduces to ennui and discontent, it is no less difficult to strive against, and they who follow in the track of others' footsteps have all the weariness of the road without the cheering excitement of the journey.

If the young lady found pleasure in charity, why shouldn't she? Benèvolence, too, for aught she knew, might be very becoming. There were a hundred little devices of costume and manner which might be adopted

to display it. What a pretty version of the good Samaritan modernised one might give in a Shetland scarf and a cottage bonnet — the very thing Chalons would like to paint; and what an effective "interior" might be made of the Dwarf's chamber, crowded with rude peasant faces, all abashed and almost awestruck as she entered.

The longer she dwelt upon the theme the more fascinating it became. "It would be really worth while to realise," said she to herself at last, — "so amusing — and so odd, an actual adventure; besides, in point of fact, it was her duty to look after this poor creature." Just so: there never was a frivolous action or a notion struck out by passing folly, for which its author could not find a justification in PRINCIPLE! We are everlastingly declaring against the knaveries and deceptions practised on us in life; but if we only took count of the cheats we play off upon curselves, we should find that there are no such impostors as our own hearts.

Nobody was ever less likely to make this discovery than Lady Hester. She believed herself everything that was good and amiable; she knew that she was handsome. Whatever contrarieties she met with in life, she was quite certain they came not from any fault of hers; and if self-esteem could give happiness she must have enjoyed it. But it cannot. The wide neutral territory between what we think of ourselves and others think of us, is filled with daring enemies to our peace, and it is impossible to venture into it without a wound to self love.

To make her visit to the Dwarf sufficient of an adventure, it must be done in secret. Nobody should

know it but Celestine, her maid, who should accompany her. Affecting a slight indisposition she could retire to her room in the evening, and then there would be abundant time to put her plan into execution. Even these few precautions against discovery were needless, for George did not return to dinner on that day, and Sydney made a headache an excuse for not appearing.

Nothing short of the love of adventure and the indulgence of a caprice could have induced Lady Hester to venture out in such a night. The rain fell in torrents, and swooped along the narrow streets in channels swollen to the size of rivulets. The river itself, fed by many a mountain stream, fell tumbling over the rocks with a deafening roar, amid which the crashing branches of the pine trees were heard at intervals. What would not have been her anxieties and lamentings if exposed to such a storm when travelling, surrounded with all the appliances that wealth can compass, and yet now, of her own free will, she wended her way on foot through the darkness and the hurricane, not only without complaining, but actually excited to a specious of pleasure in the notion of her imaginary heroism.

The courier who preceded her, as guide, enjoyed no such agreeable illusions, but muttered to himself, as he went, certain reflections by no means complimentary to the whims of fine ladies. While Mademoiselle Celestine inwardly protested that anything, "not positively wrong," would be dearly purchased by the dangers of such an excursion.

"Gregoire! Gregoire! where is he now?"

exclaimed Lady Hester, as she lost sight of her guide altogether.

"Here, mi ladi," grunted out the courier, in evident pain; "I fail to break my neck over de stone bench?"

"Where 's the lantern, Gregoire?"

"Blowed away, zum Teufel, I believe."

"What 's he saying, Celestine? — what does he mean?"

But mademoiselle could only answer by a sob of agony over her capote de Paris, flattened to her head like a Highland bonnet.

"Have you no light? You must get a light, Gregoire."

"Impossible, mi ladi, dere's nobody livin' in dese houses at all."

"Then you must go back to the inn for one; we 'll wait here till you return."

A faint shriek from Mademoiselle Celestine expressed all the terror such a proposition suggested.

"Mi ladi will be lost if she remain here all alone."

"Perdue! sans doute!" exclaimed Celestine.

"I am determined to have my way, do as I bade you, Gregoire; return for a light, and we 'll take such shelter as this door affords in the meanwhile."

It was in no spirit of general benevolence that Gregoire tracked his road back to the "Russie," since, if truth must be told, he himself had extinguished the light, in the hope of forcing Lady Hester to a retreat. Muttering a choice selection of those pleasant phrases with which his native German abounds, he trudged along, secretly resolving that he would allow his mistress a reasonable interval of time to reflect over her madcap expedition. Meanwhile, Lady Hester and her

maid stood shivering and storm-beaten beneath the drip of a narrow eve. The spirit of opposition alone sustained her ladyship at this conjuncture, for she was wet through, her shoes soaked with rain, and the cold blast that swept along seemed as if it would freeze the very blood in her heart.

Celestine could supply but little of comfort or consolation, and kept repeating the words, "Quelle aventure! quelle aventure!" in every variety of lamentation.

"He could easily have been back by this," said Lady Hester, after a long pause, and an anxious attention to every sound that might portend his coming; "I 'm certain it is full half an hour since he left us. What a night!"

"Et, quelle aventure!" exclaimed Celestine, anew.

None knew better than Lady Hester the significant depreciation of the French woman's phrase, and how differently had she rated all the hazards of the enterprise if any compromise of character were to have followed it. However, it was no time for discussion, and she let it pass.

"If he should have missed the way, and not be able to find us!" said she, after another pause.

"We shall be found dead in the morning," cried Celestine; "et, pour quelle aventure! Mon dieu, pour quelle aventure!"

The possibility that her fears suggested, and the increasing severity of the storm — for now the thunder rolled over head, and the very ground seemed to shake with the reverberation — served to alarm Lady Hester, and for the first time she became frightened at their situation.

"We could scarcely find our way back, Celestine!"

said she, rather in the tone of one asking for comfort than putting a question.

"Impossible, mi ladi."

"And Gregoire says that these houses are all uninhabited."

"Quelle aventure!" sobbed the maid.

"What can have become of him? It is more than an hour now! What was that, Celestine? — was it lightning? — there, don't you see it yonder towards the end of the street. I declare it is Gregoire, I see the lantern."

A cry of joy burst from both together, for already hope had begun to wane, and a crowd of fearful anticipations had taken its place.

Lady Hester tried to call his name, but the clattering noise of the storm drowned the weak effort. The light, however, came nearer at each instant, and there was no longer any doubt of their rescue, when suddenly it turned and disappeared at an angle of the street. Lady Hester uttered a piercing cry, and at the instant the lantern was again seen, showing that the bearer had heard the sounds.

"Here, Gregoire, we are here!" exclaimed she, in her loudest voice, and speaking in English.

Whoever carried the lantern seemed for a moment uncertain how to act, for there was no reply, nor any change of position for a few seconds, when at length the light was seen approaching where Lady Hester stood.

"I think I heard an English voice," said one, whose accents proclaimed her to be a woman.

"Oh, yes!" cried Lady Hester, passionately, "I am English. We have lost our way. Our courier

went back to the inn for a lantern, and has never returned, and we are almost dead with cold and terror. Can you guide us to the Hotel de Russie?"

"The house I live in is only a few yards off. It is better you should take shelter there for the present."

"Take care, mi ladi!" whispered Celestine, eagerly. "This may be a plot to rob and murder us."

"Have no fears on that score, mademoiselle," said the unknown, laughing and speaking in French; "we are not very rich, but as surely we are perfectly safe company."

Few as these words were, there was in their utterance that indescribable tone of good breeding and ease which at once reassured Lady Hester, who now replied to her unseen acquaintance with the observance due to an equal, and willingly accepted the arm she offered for guidance and support.

"At the end of this little street, scarcely two minutes walking, and you will be there," said the unknown.

Lady Hester scarcely heard the remark, as she ran on with voluble levity on the dangers they had run — the terrific storm — the desertion of the courier — her own fortitude — her maid's cowardice — what must have happened if they had not been discovered? till at last she bethought her of asking by what singular accident the other should have been abroad in such a terrible night.

"A neighbour and a friend of ours is very ill, Madam, and I have been to the doctor's to fetch some medicine for him."

"And I, too, was bent upon a charitable errand," said Lady Hester, quite pleased with the opportunity

of parading her own merits; "to visit a poor creature who was accidentally wounded this morning."

"It is Hans Roëckle, our poor neighbour, you mean," cried the other, eagerly; "and here we are at his house." And so saying, she pushed open a door, to which a bell, attached on the inside, gave speedy warning of their approach.

"Dearest Kate!" cried a voice from within, "how uneasy I have been at your absence!" And at the same moment a young girl appeared with a light, which, as she shaded with her hand, left her unaware of the presence of strangers.

"Think rather of this lady, and what *she* must have suffered," said Kate, as, drawing courteously back, she presented her sister to Lady Hester.

"Or rather, what I might have suffered," interposed Lady Hester, "but for the fortunate accident of your coming. A few moments back, as I stood shivering beneath the storm, I little thought that I should owe my rescue to a countrywoman. May I learn the name of one to whom I am so deeply indebted?"

"Dalton, Madam," said Nelly; and then, with a slight confusion, added, "We ought, perhaps, to tell you the circumstances which induced my sister to be abroad at such an hour."

"She knows it all," broke in Kate, "and can the more readily forgive it, as it was her own errand. But will not this lady come near the fire?" said she, addressing Mademoiselle Celestine, who, as she followed the rest into the humble chamber, was bestowing a most depreciatory glance upon the place, the furniture, and the people.

"It is only my maid," said Lady Hester, carelessly; "and now it is time I should introduce myself, and say that Lady Hester Onslow owes you all her gratitude." Ellen curtsied respectfully at the announcement, but Kate Dalton's cheek coloured slightly, and she bent a look of more than common admiration at the handsome figure of the stranger. An innate reverence for rank and title was rooted in her heart, and she was overjoyed to think that their chance acquaintance should be one of that class so distinctively marked out for honour. Prepared to admire every grace and fascination of the high born, Kate watched, with eager and delighted looks, the slightest gestures, the least traits of manner of the fashionable beauty. They were all attractions to which her heart gave a ready response. The accent in which she spoke, the careless elegance of her attitude as she lay back in her chair, the charming negligence with which she wore the little portions of dress exchanged for her own, were all inimitable graces in the eyes of the simple girl.

As for Lady Hester, accustomed to all the servile offices of her own attendants, to be punctiliously obeyed and waited on, it was yet a new sensation to watch the zealous and eager devotion with which the two sisters ministered to her wants. In utter forgetfulness of themselves, they had brought forth the little resources of their humble wardrobe; too happy, as it seemed, when they saw their services so willingly accepted. Fortunately, they did not perceive the contemptuous looks with which "Mademoiselle" regarded their attentions, nor overhear her exclamation of "Mon Dieu! where did they gather together these 'chiffons?'"

as she surveyed the somewhat antiquated stores of their toilette.

Even had Lady Hester's good breeding not prompted a gracious reception of what was so generously offered, the very singularity of the scene would have had its charm in her estimation. She was delighted with everything, even to Kate Dalton's slippers, which, by a most happy flattery, were a little too large for her. She fancied, too, that her costume, curiously made up of shreds and patches the most incongruous, was the dress of an Irish peasant! and was in an ecstasy at the thought of a similar one at her next fancy ball! Besides all these internal sources of self-satisfaction, the admiration of the two sisters was another and more legitimate cause of pleasure; for even Ellen, with all her natural reserve and caution, was scarcely less impressed than Kate with the charm of those fascinations which, however destined but for one class of society, are equally successful in all.

Ellen Dalton's life had not been devoid of trials, nor had they failed to teach their own peculiar lessons; and yet her experiences had not shown her how very like right feeling good breeding can be, and how closely good manners may simulate every trait of a high and generous nature.

CHAPTER IX.

A Fine Lady's Blandishments.

We left Lady Hester, in our last chapter, employed in the exercise of those fascinations which, however unlike in other respects, have this resemblance to virtue, that they are assuredly their own reward. The charm of courtesy never conferred one half the pleasure on those for whom it was exercised as to him who wielded it. It matters little whether the magician be prince or "charlatan," the art of pleasing is one of the most agreeable faculties human nature can be endowed with. Whether Lady Hester was aware of the theory or not, she felt the fact, as she saw the undisguised admiration in the faces of the two sisters; for while she had won over Nelly by the elevation of her sentiments and the kindliness of her expressions, Kate was fascinated by her beauty, her grace, her easy gaiety, and a certain voluble lightness that simulates frankness.

Without anything that approached the prying of curiosity, for she was both too well bred and too little interested to have so felt such a motive, she inquired by what accident the Daltons remained at Baden so late in the season, affected to see some similarity between their cases and her own, asked in the most feeling terms for their father, whose ill health she deplored, and then, took such an interest in "dear Frank," that Kate could not resist showing a portrait of him, which,

however humble its claims to art, still conveyed a not unfaithful resemblance of the handsome youth.

While thus hearing about *them*, she was equally communicative about *herself*, and enlisted all the sympathies of the girls as she recounted their escape from the torrent in the Black Forest, and their subsequent refuge in Baden. Thence she diverged to Sir Stafford's illness, her own life of seclusion and sadness, and, by an easy transition, came round to poor Hans Roëckle and the accident of that morning.

"Do tell me everything about the poor dear thing," said she, poutingly. "They say it is mad."

"No, Madam," said Nelly, gravely; "Hans, with many eccentricities of manner, is very far from deficient in good sense or judgment, and is more than ordinarily endowed with right feeling and kindness of heart."

"He is a dwarf, surely."

"Yes, but in intelligence —"

"Oh that, of course," interrupted she; "they are rarely deficient in acuteness, but so spiteful, so full of malice. My dear child, there 's no trusting them. They never forget an injury, nor even an imaginary slight. There was that creature — what was his name? — that Polish thing, Benywowski, I think; you remember, they baked him in a pie, to amuse Charles the Second — well, he never forgave it afterwards, and to the day of his death could never bear the sight of pastry."

"I must except poor Hans from this category," said Nelly, mildly, and with difficulty restraining a smile. "He is amiability itself."

Lady Hester shook her head doubtfully, and went on.

"Their very caprices, my dear, lead them into all kind of extravagances. For instance, this poor thing, it would seem, is so enamoured of these wooden toys that he makes himself, that he cannot bear to part with them. Now, there 's no saying to what excesses he might be carried by this absurd passion. I have read of the most atrocious murders committed under a similar fanaticism."

"I assure you, Madam, there need be no fear of such, in the present instance. In the first case, Hans is too good; in the second, the objects are too valueless."

"Very true, so they are; but he doesn't think them so, you know."

"Nay, my lady; nor would you either, were you to regard them with attention," broke in Kate, whose cheek was now one glow of scarlet. "Even this, half finished as it is, may lay claim to merit." And as she spoke, she removed a napkin from a little statue, before which she held the candle.

"For shame, Kate, dearest Kate!" cried Nelly, starting up in bashful discomfiture.

"It is a statuette of poor Frank, Madam," continued Kate, who, totally regardless of her sister's interruption, now exhibited the figure nearer. "You see him just as he left us, his knapsack on his shoulder, his sword fastened across it, his little cap on one side of his head, and that happy smile upon his lips. Poor dear fellow! how sad a heart it covered!"

"And was this *his* work?" asked Lady Hester, in astonishment.

"No, Madam; my sister Nelly was the artist of this as of all the others. Unaided and untaught, her own

ingenuity alone suggesting the means, as her imagination supplied the conception —"

"Kate! dear, dear Kate!" said Ellen, with a voice of almost rebuke. "You forget how unworthy these poor efforts are of such high-sounding epithets." Then, turning to Lady Hester, she continued, "Were it to ears less charitable than yours, Madam, these foolish words were spoken, I should fear the criticism our presumption would seem to call forth. But you will not think harshly of us for ignorance."

"But this figure is admirable; the attitude is graceful; the character of the head, the features, are in good keeping. I know, of course, nothing of the resemblance to your brother, but, as a work of art, I am competent to say it has high merit. Do tell me how the thought of doing these things first occurred to you."

"I learned drawing as a child, Madam, and was always fond of it," said Ellen, with a degree of constraint that seemed as if the question were painful to answer.

"Yes, and so have I spent months — ay, I believe I might say years — at the easel, copying every Giorgione at Venice and every Vandyk at Genoa, and yet such a thought never suggested itself to *me*."

"I am happy to think so, Madam," was the low response.

"Why so? how do you mean?" asked Lady Hester, eagerly.

"That the motive in my case never could have been yours, Madam."

"And what was the motive?"

"Poverty, Madam. The word is not a pleasant word to syllable, but it is even better than any attempt

at disguise. These trifles, while beguiling many a dreary hour, have helped us through a season of more than usual difficulty."

"Yes, Madam," broke in Kate. "You are aware that Papa's property is in Ireland, and for some years back it has been totally unproductive?"

"How very sad — how dreadful," exclaimed Lady Hester. But whether the expressions referred to the condition of the Daltons, or of Ireland, it is not quite clear.

"I doubt, Madam, if I should have ventured on the confession," said Ellen, with a voice of calm firmness, "were it no for the opportunity it offers of bearing testimony to the kindness of our poor friend yonder, Hans Roëckle. These efforts of mine have met such favour in his eyes that he accepts them all, taking them as rapidly as they are finished, and, I need not say, treating me with a generosity that would become a more exalted patron and a better artist."

"It is quite a romance, I declare," cried Lady Hester. "The Wood Demon and the Maiden. Only he is not in love with you, I hope?"

"I 'm not quite so sure of that," said Kate, laughing; "at least, when some rivalry of her own wooden images does not intervene."

"Hush! Hans is awaking," said Ellen, as on tiptoe she crossed the room noiselessly, and opened the door of the chamber where the Dwarf lay. Lady Hester and Kate now drew near and peeped in. On a low settle — over which an old scarlet saddle-cloth, fringed with tarnished lace, was spread as a quilt — lay Hans Roëckle, his wounded arm supported by a pillow at

his side — his dark eyes glistened with the bright glare of fever, and his cheeks were flushed and burning, as his lips moved unceasingly, with a low muttering, which he continued, regardless of the presence of those who now approached his bed-side.

"What is it he is saying? — does he complain of pain?" asked Lady Hester.

"I cannot understand him," said Nelly; "for ever since his accident he has spoken in his native dialect — the patois of the Bregenzer Wald — of which I am utterly ignorant; still he will reply to me in good German when questioned." Then stooping down, she asked — "Are you better, Hans?"

Hans looked up steadfastly in her face without speaking, it seemed as if her voice had arrested his wandering faculties, but yet not awakened any intelligence.

"You are thirsty, Hans," said she, gently, as she lifted a cup of water to his lips. He drank greedily, and then passed his hand across his brow, as if trying to dispel some tormenting fancies. After a second or two, he said, "It was in Nuremberg, in the Oden Gasse, it happened. The Ritter von Ottocar stabbed her as she knelt at the cross; and the Dwarf, Der Mohrchen, as they called him, tore off his turban to bind up the wound; and what was his reward, maiden — tell me that! Are ye all so shamed that ye dare not speak it?"

"We know it not, Hans — we never heard of the Ritter nor the Mohrchen before."

"I 'll tell you, then. They burned him as a warlock in the Hohen Platz next morning." With a burst of wild and savage laughter he closed this speech,

which he spoke in good German; but immediately after his thoughts seemed to turn to his old Tyrol haunts and the familiar language of his native land, as he sung, in a low voice, the following words: —

A Buchsel zu schiessen,
A Stossring zu schlagn,
A Dienal zu liebn,
Muss a Bue hahn.

"What does that mean? — do tell me," said Lady Hester, whose interest in the scene was more that of curiosity than compassion.

"It is a peasant dialect; but means, that a rifle to shoot with, a weapon to wield, and a maiden to love, are all that a good Tyroler needs in life," said Kate, while Nelly busied herself in arranging the position of the wounded limb — little offices for which the poor Dwarf looked his gratitude silently.

"How wild his looks are," said Lady Hester. "See how his eyes glance along the walls, as if some objects were moving before them." And so in reality was it. Hanserl's looks were riveted upon the strange and incongruous assemblage of toys which, either suspended from nails or ranged on shelves, decorated the sides of the chamber. "Ay," said he at last, with a melancholy smile, "thou 'lt have to put off all this bravery soon, my pretty damsels, and don the black veil and the hood, for thy master Hans is dying!"

"He is talking to the wax-figures," whispered Kate.

"And ye too, my brave hussars, and ye Uhlaners with your floating banners, must lower your lances as ye march in the funeral procession, when Hanserl is dead! Take down the wine-bush from the door,

hostess, and kneel reverently, for the bell is ringing; and here comes the priest in his alp, and with the pix before him. Hush! they are chanting his requiem. Ah! yes: Hanserl is away to the far-off land.

Wo sind die Täge lang genug,
Wo sind die Nächte mild."

"Come away, we do but excite his mind to wanderings," said Ellen; "so long as there is light to see these toys, his fancy endows them all with life and feeling, and his poor brain is never at rest." The sound of voices in the outer room at the same moment caught their attention, and they heard the Courier of Lady Hester in deep converse with Mademoiselle Celestine. He, deploring the two hours he had passed in hunting after his mistress through the dark streets of the village; and she, not less eloquently, bewailing the misery of a night spent in that comfortless cabin. To visit a wretched Dwarf, too! Parbleu! had it been a rendezvous with some one worth while, but an excursion without an object, "sans émotion même?" it is too bad.

"Que voulez-vous!" said Monsieur Grégoire, with a shrug of the shoulders; "she is English!"

"Ah! that is no reason for a vulgar caprice, and I, for one, will not endure it longer. I cannot do so. Such things compromise one's self. I'll give warning to-morrow. What would my poor dear mistress, la Marquise, say if she only knew how 'mes petits talents' were employed."

"Do not be rash, Mademoiselle," interposed the Courier; "they are rich, very rich, and we are going to Italy too, the real 'Pays de Cocagne' of our profession."

How far his persuasions might have gone in inducing her to reconsider her determination there is no saying, when they were suddenly interrupted by Lady Hesters's appearance.

Her first care was to ascertain that her absence from the hotel had not been remarked — her secret, as she loved to fancy it, remained sacred. Having learned thus much, she listened with a kind of childish pleasure to the Courier's version of all his unhappy wanderings in search of her, until he at last descried a light, the only one that shone from any window in the whole village.

As Grégoire had provided himself with sufficient number of shawls, cloaks, and clogs, and, as the storm had now passed over, Lady Hester prepared to take her leave, delighted with her whole night's adventure. There had been excitement enough to make it all she could desire; nor did she well know whether most to admire her heroism during the storm, or the success with which she captivated the two sisters; the courage which planned the expedition, or the grace with which it was executed.

"You 'll come and see me, Miss Dalton; mind, I'm always at home. Remember, Miss Kate Dalton, that they must not deny me to *you*," said she, in her most winning of manners. The two girls gave their promise in bashful diffidence, while she continued —

"You 'll say to your Papa, too, that Sir Stafford will wait on him whenever he is able to leave the house. Mr. Onslow, indeed, ought to call at once; but he is so odd. Never mind, we shall be great friends; and you 'll bring all your little carving tools and your models with you, and work in my room.

Your sister her embroidery, or her lace, or her ‚crochet,' or whatever it is, or you 'll read German for me — like a dear child, that will be so delightful. I can 't understand a word of it, but it sounds so soft, and you'll tell me all it's about — won't you? And then this poor thing must want for nothing."

"Nay, Madam, he is in no need of anything but kindness. In a land where such simple habits prevail, Hans Roëckle passes for rich."

"How strange! how very odd; but I remember that poor Prince of Stolzenheimer. Papa used to say that he had six cordons, but only one coat! I believe it was true."

"Hanserl is better off, Madam," replied Nelly, smiling; "at least as regards the coats."

"Tell him, then, that I've been to see him, and am so grieved at his accident, but that it was all Colonel Haggerstone's fault — a bit of silly vanity to show how well he could shoot — and I 'm certain it just comes of being used to the pistols. I never missed when I fired with Norwoods!"

The utterance of that name seemed to recal her from the discursive babble. She paused, and for a moment or two she was silent. At last, turning to the sisters, she reiterated her hopes of a speedy meeting, and, with a cordial pressure of the hand to each, wished her last good night, and departed.

CHAPTER X.

A Family Discussion.

Long before Lady Hester awoke on the following morning every circumstance of her visit was known to Grounsell. It was the Doctor's custom to see Dalton early each day, and before Sir Stafford was stirring, and to chat away an hour or so with the invalid, telling the current news of the time, and cheering his spirits by those little devices which are not among the worst resources of the Materia Medica. With all his knowledge of Lady Hester's character — her caprices, her whims, and her insatiable passion for excitement, he was still astonished beyond measure at this step: not that the false air of benevolence or charity deceived him — he was too old a practitioner in medicine, and had seen far too much of the dark side of human nature to be easily gulled — but his surprise arose from the novelty of her condescending to know, and even propitiate the good graces of people, whom she usually professed to regard as the least interesting of all classes of mankind. The "reduced lady or gentleman" had only presented themselves to Lady Hester's mind by the medium of an occasional curiously worded advertisement in a morning paper, and were invariably associated with a subsequent police report, where the object of charity was sure to be confronted with half-a-dozen peers or members of parliament, whose sympathies he had put under contribution, to support a

life of infamy or extravagance. "A begging impostor" rang in her mind as a phrase whose ingredient words could not be divorced, and she was thoroughly convinced that imposture and poverty were convertible terms. The very notion of any one having once been well off, and being now in embarrassment, was, to her deeming, most satisfactory evidence of past misconduct and present knavery. Grounsell had heard her hold forth on this theme more than once, "embroidering the sentiment" with an occasional sly allusion to himself and his own fortunes, so that he had often thought over the difficulty of serving the Daltons with Sir Stafford, by reflecting on the hostility any project would meet with from "my Lady," and now accident, or something very like it, had done what all his ingenuity could not succeed in discovering.

The announcement at first rendered him perfectly mute, he heard it without power to make the slightest observation; and it was only at the end of a lengthy description from the two sisters, that he exclaimed, in a kind of half soliloquy, "By Jove, it it so like her, after all!"

"I'm sure of it," said Nelly; "her manner was kindness and gentleness itself. You should have seen the tender way she took poor Hanserl's hand in her own, and how eagerly she asked us to translate for her the few stray words he uttered."

"Of course she did. I could swear to it all, now that my eyes are opened."

"And with what winning grace she spoke," cried Kate. "How the least phrase came from her lips with a fascination that still haunts me."

"Just so, just so!" muttered Grounsell.

"How such traits of benevolence ennoble high station," said Nelly.

"How easy to credit all that one hears of the charms of intercourse, where manner like hers prevails on every side," cried Kate, enthusiastically.

"How thoughtful in all her kindness!"

"What elegance in every movement!"

"With what inborn courtesy she accepted the little valueless attentions, which were all we could render her."

"How beautiful she looked, in all the disorder of a dress, so unlike her own splendour. I could almost fancy that old straw chair to be a handsome fauteuil since she sat in it."

"How delightful it must be to be admitted to the freedom of daily intercourse with such a person — to live within the atmosphere of such goodness, and such refinement;" and thus they went on ringing the changes upon every gift and grace, from the genial warmth of her heart, to the snowy whiteness of her dimpled hands; while Grounsell fidgeted in his chair — searched for his handkerchief — his spectacles — his snuff-box, dropped them all in turn, and gathered them up again, in a perfect fever of embarrassment and indecision.

"And you see her every day, Doctor?" said Nelly.

"Yes, every day, Madam," said he, hastily; and not noticing nor thinking to whom he was replying.

"And is she always as charming, always as fascinating?"

"Pretty much the same, I think," said he, with a grunt.

"How delightful; and always in the same buoyancy of spirits?"

"Very little changed in that respect," said he, with another grunt.

"We have often felt for poor Sir Stafford being taken ill away from his home, and obliged to put up with the miserable resources of a watering place in winter; but, I own, when I think of the companionship of Lady Hester, much of my compassion vanishes."

"He needs it all, then," said Grounsell, as, thrusting his hands into the recesses of his pockets, he sat a perfect picture of struggling embarrassment.

"Are his sufferings so very great?"

Grounsell nodded abruptly, for now he was debating within himself what course to take, for while, on one side, he deemed it a point of honour not to divulge to strangers, as were the Daltons, any of the domestic circumstances of those with whom he lived, he felt, on the other, reluctant to suffer Lady Hester's blandishments to pass for qualities more sterling and praiseworthy.

"She asked the girls to go and see her," said Dalton, now breaking silence for the first time; for although flattered in the main by what he heard of the fine lady's manner towards his daughters, he was not without misgivings that what they interpreted as courtesy might just as probably be called condescension, against which his Irish pride of birth and blood most sturdily rebelled. "She asked them to go and see her, and it was running in my head if she might not have heard something of the family connexion."

"Possibly!" asserted Grounsell, too deep in his own calculations to waste a thought on such a speculation.

"My wife's uncle, Joe Godfrey, married an English-

woman. The sister was aunt to some rich city banker; and indeed, to tell the truth, his friends in Ireland never thought much of the connexion — but you see times are changed. *They* are up now, and *we* are down — the way of the world! It 's little I ever thought of claiming relationship with the like o' them!"

"But if it 's they, who seek us, Papa?" whispered Kate.

"Ay, that alters the case, my dear; not but I 'd as soon excuse the politeness. Here we are, living in a small way; 'till matters come round in Ireland, we can't entertain them — not even give them a dinner party."

"Oh, dearest Papa," broke in Nelly; "is not our poverty a blessing if it save us the humiliation of being absurd! Why should we think of such a thing? Why should we, with our straitened means and the habits narrow fortune teaches, presume even to a momentary equality with those so much above us."

"Faith, it 's true enough!" cried Dalton, his cheek flushed with anger. "We *are* changed, there 's no doubt of it; or it is not a Dalton would say the words you 've just said. I never knew before, that the best in the land wasn't proud to come under our roof."

"When we had a roof," said Nelly, firmly. "And if these ancestors had possessed a true and a higher pride, mayhap we might still have one. Had they felt shame to participate in schemes of extravagance and costly display — had they withheld encouragement from a ruinous mode of living, we might still be dwellers in our own home and our own country."

Dalton seemed thunderstruck at the boldness of a speech so unlike the gentle character of her who had

uttered it. To have attributed any portion of the family calamities to their own misconduct — to have laid the blame of their downfal to any score save that of English legislation, acts of parliament, grand jury laws, failure of the potato crop, tithes, Terry alts, or smut in the wheat — was a heresy he never, in his gloomiest moments, had imagined, and now he was to hear it from the lips of his own child.

"Nelly — Nelly Dalton," said he; "but why do I call you Dalton? Have you a drop of our blood in your veins at all — or is it the Godfreys you take after? Extravagance — ruinous living — waste — what'll you say next?" He couldn't continue, indignation and anger seemed almost to suffocate him.

"Papa — dearest, kindest Papa!" cried Nelly, as the tears burst from her eyes, "be not angry with me, nor suppose that any ungenerous repining against our altered lot finds a place in my heart. God knows that I grieve not for myself; in the humble sphere in which I am placed, I have found true contentment — greater, perhaps, than higher fortunes would have given me; for here, my duties are better defined, and my sense of them is clearer. If I feel sorrow, it is for you and my dear sister; for you, Papa, who suffer from many a privation, for her, who might well adorn a more exalted station. But for me — the lame Nelly as children used to call me —" She was not suffered to finish her speech, for already her father had clasped his arms around her, and Kate, in a gush of tears, was sobbing on his shoulder."

"Where 's the Doctor — what 's become of him?" said Dalton, as, recovering from his emotion, he wished to give a different direction to their thoughts.

"He went away half an hour ago, Papa," said Kate. "He always goes off without saying good-bye, whenever there is a word said about family."

"I noticed that, too, my dear," said Dalton, "and I wouldn't wonder if he came of low people; not but he 's a kind creature, and mighty good-hearted."

Nelly could probably have suggested a better reason for the Doctor's conduct, but she prudently forbore from again alluding to a theme already too painful.

With the reader's permission, we will now follow him, as, with a gesture of impatience, he abruptly left the room, on the very first mention by Dalton of that genealogical tree, in whose branches he loved to perch himself.

"An old fool," muttered Grounsell, as he passed down stairs; "an old fool that no experience will ever make wiser! Well may his native country be a stumbling-block to legislators, if his countrymen be all like him, with his family pride and pretension! Confound him, can't he see that there 's no independence for a man in debt, and no true self-respect left for him who can't pay his tailor. For himself there 's no help; but the poor girls! he 'll be the ruin of *them*. Kate is already a willing listener to his nonsensical diatribes about blood and family; and poor Nelly's spirits will be broken in the hopeless conflict, with his folly! Just so, that will be the end of it; he will turn the head of the one, and break the heart of the other, and yet, all the while, he firmly believes he is leaving a better heritage behind him in this empty pride, than if he could bequeath every acre that once belonged to them." Thus soliloquizing, he went on ringing changes over every form of imprudence, waste, vanity, and absurdity,

to which, by applying the simple adjective of "Irish," he fancied were at once intelligible, and needed no other explanation. In this mood he made his entrance into Sir Stafford's chamber, and so full of his own thoughts, that the worthy Baronet could not fail to notice his pre-occupation.

"Eh! Grounsell, what's the matter — another row with my lady, eh?" said he, smiling with his own quiet smile.

"Not to-day. We've not met this morning, and, consequently, the armistice of yesterday is still unbroken! The fatigue of last night has doubtless induced her to sleep a little longer, and so I have contrived to arrive at noon without the risk of an apoplexy."

"What fatigue do you allude to?"

"Oh, I forgot — I have a long story for you. What do you suppose her ladyship has been performing now?"

"I've heard all about it," said Sir Stafford, pettishly. "George has given me the whole narrative of that unlucky business. We must take care of the poor fellow, Grounsell, and see that he wants for nothing."

"You're thinking of the pistol-shooting; but that's not her ladyship's last," said the Doctor, with a malicious laugh. "It is as a Lady Bountiful she has come out and made her *début*, last night — I am bound to say, with infinite success." And without further preface Grounsell related the whole adventure of Lady Hester's visit to the Dwarf, omitting nothing of those details we have already laid before the reader, and dilating with all his own skill upon the possible

consequences of the step. "I have told you already about these people; of that old fool, the father, with his Irish pride, his Irish pretensions, his poverty, and his insane notions about family. Well, his head, a poor thing in the best of times, is gone clean mad about this visit. And then the girls! good, dear, affectionate children as they are, they're in a kind of paroxysm of ecstasy about her ladyship's style, her beauty, her dress, the charm of her amiability, the fascination of her manner. Their little round of daily duties will henceforth seem a dreary toil, the very offices of their charity will lose all the glow of zeal, when deprived of that elegance which refinement can throw over the veriest trifle. Ay! don't smile at it — the fact is a stubborn one. They 'd barter the deepest devotion, they ever rendered to assuage pain, for one trick of that flattery with which my lady captivated them.

"Will all the poetry of poor Nelly's heart shut out the memory of graces associated with the vanities of fashion? Will all Kate's dutiful affection exalt those household drudgeries in her esteem, the performances of which will henceforth serve to separate her more and more from one her imagination has already enshrined as an idol."

"You take the matter too seriously to heart, Grounsell," said Sir Stafford, smiling.

"Not a bit of it; I've studied symptoms too long and too carefully not to be ever on the look-out for results. To Lady Hester, this visit is a little episode as easily forgotten as any chance incident of the journey. But what an event is it in the simple story of *their* lives!"

"Well, well, it cannot be helped now; the thing is done, and there 's an end of it," said Sir Stafford, pettishly; "and I confess I cannot see the matter as you do; for I have been thinking for two days back about these Daltons, and of some mode of being of service to them, and this very accident may suggest the way. I have been looking over some old letters and papers, and I 've no doubt that I have had — unintentionally, of course — a share in the poor fellow's ruin. Do you know, Grounsell, that this is the very same Peter Dalton who once wrote to me the most insulting letters, and even a defiance to fight a duel, because a distant relative bequeathed to me a certain estate, that more naturally should have descended to him. At first, I treated the epistles as unworthy of any serious attention — they were scarcely intelligible, and not distinguished by anything like a show of reason; but when from insult the writer proceeded to menace, I mentioned the affair to my lawyer, and, indeed, gave him permission to take any steps that might be necessary to rid me of so unpleasant a correspondent. I never heard more of the matter; but now, on looking over some papers, I see that the case went hardly with Dalton, for there was a "rule to show cause," and an "attachment," and I don't know what besides, obtained against him from the King's Bench, and he was actually imprisoned eight months for this very business, so that, besides having succeeded to this poor fellow's property, I have also deprived him of his liberty. Quite enough of hardship to have suffered at the hands of any one man, — and that one, not an enemy."

"And would you believe it, Onslow, we have talked

over you and your affairs a hundred times together, and yet he has never even alluded to this? One would think that such an event would make an impression upon most men; but, assuredly, he is either the most forgetful or the most generous fellow on earth."

"How very strange! And so you tell me that he remembers my name, and all the circumstances of that singular bequest — for singular it was — from a man whom I never saw since he was a boy."

"He remembers it all. It was the last blow fortune dealt him, and, indeed, he seemed scarcely to require so heavy a stroke to fell him, for, by his own account, he had been struggling on, in debt and difficulty, for many a year, putting off creditors by the plausible plea that a considerable estate must eventually fall in to him. It is quite certain that he believed this himself, but he also maintained a course of expenditure that, were he even in possession of the property, it would have been impossible to keep up. His brother-in-law's parsimony, too, was a constant source of self-gratulation to him, fancying, as he did, that a considerable sum in bank stock would be among the benefits of this bequest. To find himself cut off, without even a mention of his name, was then to know that he was utterly, irretrievably ruined."

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Onslow. "I never suspected the case had been so hard a one. His letters — you shall see them yourself — bore all the evidence of a man more touchy on the score of a point of honour, than mindful of a mere money matter. He seemed desirous of imputing to me — who, as I have told you, never saw Mr. Godfrey for above forty years — something like undue influence, and, in fact, of having

prejudiced his brother-in-law against him. He dated his angry epistles from a park or a castle — I forget which — and they bore a seal of armorial pretensions, such as an archduke might acknowledge. All these signs seemed to me so indicative of fortune and standing, that I set my friend down for a very bloodthirsty Irishman, but assuredly never imagined that poverty had contributed its sting to the injury."

"I can easily conceive all that," said Grounsell. "A this very moment, with want staring him on every side, he'd rather talk of his former style at — confound the barbarous place, I never can remember the name of it — than he'd listen to any suggestion for the future benefit of his children."

"I have been a grievous enemy to him," said Sir Stafford, musingly.

"He reckons the cost at something like six thousand a year," said Grounsell.

"Not the half of it, Doctor. The estate, when I succeeded to it, was in a ruinous condition. A pauper and rebellious tenantry holding their tenures on nominal rents, and either living in open defiance of all law, or scheming to evade it by a hundred subterfuges. Matters are somewhat better; but if so, it has cost me largely to make them so. Disabuse his mind, I beg you, of this error. His loss was at least not so heavy as he reckoned."

"Faith, I 'll scarcely venture on so very delicate a theme," said Grounsell, dryly. "I 'm not quite so sure how he 'd take it."

"I see, Doctor," said Onslow, laughing, "that his duelling tastes have impressed you with a proper degree of respect. Well, let us think of something more

to the purpose than rectifying a mere mistaken opinion. How can we serve him? What can be done for him?"

"Ruined gentlemen, like second-hand uniforms, are generally sent to the colonies," said Grounsell; "but Dalton is scarcely fit for export."

"What if we could get him appointed a magistrate in one of the West India Islands?"

"New rum would finish him the first rainy season."

"Is he fit for a consulship?"

"About as much as for lord chancellor. I tell you the man's pride would revolt at anything to which a duty was annexed. Whatever you decide on must be untramelled by any condition of this kind."

"An annuity, then; some moderate sum sufficient to support them in respectability," said Onslow; "that is the only thing I see for it, and I am quite ready to do my part, which, indeed, is full as much a matter of honour as generosity."

"How will you induce him to accept it?"

"We can manage that, I fancy, with a little contrivance. I 'll consult Prichard; he is coming here this very day about those renewals, and he 'll find a way of doing it."

"You 'll have need of great caution," said Grounsell; "without being naturally suspicious, misfortune has rendered him very sensitive as to anything like a slight. To this hour he is ignorant that his daughter sells those little figures; and although he sees, in a hundred appliances to his comfort, signs of resources of which he knows nothing, he never troubles his head how the money comes."

"What a strange character."

"Strange, indeed. True pride and false pride,

manly patience, childish petulence, generosity, selfishness, liberality, meanness, even to the spirits alternating between boy-like levity and downright despair! the whole is such a mixture as I never saw before, and yet I can fancy it is as much the national temperament as that of the individual."

And now Grounsell, launched upon a sea without compass or chart, hurried off to lose himself in vague speculation, about questions that have puzzled, and are puzzling, wiser heads than his.

CHAPTER XI.

"A Peep between the Shutters," at a new Character.

Not even Mademoiselle Célestine herself, nor the two London footmen, now condemned to exhibit their splendid proportions to the untutored gaze of German rustics, could have chafed and fretted under the unhappy detention at Baden, with a greater impatience, than did George Onslow. A young Guardsman, who often fancied that London, out of season, was a species of Palmyra; who lived but for the life that only one capital affords; who could not credit the fact, that people could ride, dress, dine, and drive anywhere else — was lamentably "ill bestowed" among the hills and valleys, the winding glens and dense pine forests of a little corner of Germany.

If he liked the excitement of hard exercise, it was when the pleasure was combined with somewhat of peril, as in a fox-hunt, or heightened by the animation of a contest, in a rowing match. Scenery, too, he cared for, when it came among the incidents of a deer-stalking day, in the Highlands. Even walking, if it were a match against time, was positively not distasteful; but to ride, walk, row or exert himself, for the mere exercise, was in his philosophy only a degree better than a sentence to the treadmill. The slavery being voluntary, not serving to exalt the motive.

To a mind thus constituted, the delay at Baden was intolerable. Lady Hester's system of small irri-

tations and provocations rendered domesticity and home life out of the question. She was never much given to reading at any time, and now books were not to be had; Sydney was so taken up with studying German, that she was quite uncompanionable. Her father was too weak to bear much conversation; and as for Grounsell, George always set him down for a quiz: good-hearted in his way, but a bit of a bore, and too fond of old stories. Had he been a young lady, in such a predicament, he would have kept a journal, a petty martyrology of himself and his feelings, and eked out his sorrows between Childe Harold and Werther. Had he been an elderly one, he would have written folios by the post, and covered acres of canvas with dogs in worsted, and tigers in Berlin wool. Alas! he had no such resources. Education had supplied him with but one comfort and consolation — a cigar, and so he smoked away, incessantly — sometimes as he lounged out of the window, after breakfast, in all the glory of an embroidered velvet cap, and a gorgeous dressing-gown, sometimes as he sauntered in the empty saloon, or the deserted corridors, in the weed-grown garden, in the dishabille of a many-pocketed shooting-jacket, and cork-soled shoes. Now, as he lounged along the dreary streets, or paced along the little wooden bridge, wondering within himself how much longer a man could resist the temptation that suggested a spring over the balustrade into the dark pool beneath.

"He had come abroad partly for Sydney's sake, partly because, having "gone somewhat too fast" in town, an absence had become advisable. But now, as he sauntered about the deserted streets of the little

village, not knowing how long the durance might last; without an occupation; without a resource; both his brotherly love and prudence began to fail him, and he wished he had remained behind, and taken the chances, whatever they might be, of his creditors' forbearance. His monied embarrassments involved nothing dishonourable; he had done no more than what some score of very well-principled young men have done, and are doing at this very hour, — ay, good reader, and will do again, when you and I have gone where all our moralizing will not deceive any more, — he had contracted debts, the payment of which must depend upon others, — he had borrowed, what no efforts of his own could restore, — he had gambled, and lost sums totally disproportionate to his fortune; but, in all these things, he was still within the pale of honourable conduct — at least, so said the code under which he lived, and George believed it.

Sir Stafford, who only learned about the half of his son's liabilities, was thunderstruck at the amount. It was scarcely a year and a half ago, that he had paid all George's debts, and they were then no trifle; and now he saw all the old items revived and magnified, as if there was only one beaten road to ruin — and that began at Crocky's, and ended at "the Bench." The very names of the *dramatis personæ* were the same. It was Lazarus Levi lent the money, at sixty per cent. It was another patriarch, called Gideon Masham, discounted the same. A lucky viscount had once more "done the trick" at hazard; and if Cribbiter had not broken down in training, why Madame Pompadour had, and so the same result came about. George Onslow had got what Newmarket-men call

a "squeeze," and was in for about seven thousand pounds.

Nothing is more remarkable in our English code social, than the ingenuity with which we have contrived to divide ranks and classes of men, making distinctions so subtle, that only long habit and training are able to appreciate. Not alone are the gradations of our nobility accurately defined, but the same distinctions prevail among the "untitled" classes, and even descend to the professional and trading ranks; so that the dealer in one commodity shall take the "pas" of another; and he who purveys the glass of port for your dessert, would be outraged if classed with him who contributed the Stilton! These hair splittings are very unintelligible to foreigners; but, as we hold to them, the presumption is, that they suit us; and I should not have stopped now to bestow a passing notice on the system, if it were not that we see it, in some cases, pushed to a degree of extreme resembling absurdity, making even of the same career in life a sliding-scale of respectability; as for instance, when a young gentleman of good expectations and fair fortune has outraged his guardians and his friends by extravagance, he is immediately removed from the Guards, and drafted into the Infantry of the Line; if he misbehaves there, they usually send him to India; is he incorrigible, he is compelled to remain in some regiment there, or in cases of inveterate bad habits, he exchanges into the Cape Rifles, and gets his next removal from the knife of a Caffre.

Ancient geographers have decided, we are not aware on what grounds, that there is a place between "H—ll and Connaught." Modern discovery, with more certi-

tude, has shown one between the Guards and the Line. A species of military purgatory, where, after a due expiation of offences, the sinner may return to the Paradiso of the Household Brigade without ever transgressing the Inferno of a marching regiment. This half-way stage is the "Rifles." So long as a young fashionable falls no lower, he is safe. There is no impugnment of character — no injury that cannot be repaired. Now, George Onslow had reached so far. He was compelled to exchange into the —th, then quartered in Ireland. It is true he did not join his regiment; his father had interest enough somewhere to obtain a leave of absence for his son, and first Lieutenant Onslow, vice Ridgeway promoted, was suffered to amuse himself howsoever and wheresoever he pleased.

The "exchange," and the reasons for which it was effected, were both unpleasant subjects of reflection to George; and as he had few others, these continued to haunt him, till at last he fancied that every one was full of the circumstance, each muttering as he passed, "That's Onslow, that was in the Coldstreams." Lady Hester, indeed, did not always leave the matter purely imaginary, but threw out occasional hints about soldiers who never served, except at St. James's or Windsor, and who were kept for the wonderment and admiration of foreign sovereigns when visiting England — just as Suffolk breeders exhibit a "punch" — or a Berkshire farmer will show a hog, for the delectation of swine fanciers. Where children show toys, kings show soldiers, and ours are considered very creditable productions of the kind; but Lady Hester averred, with more of truth than she believed, that a man of spirit would prefer a

somewhat different career. These currents, coming as they did in season and out of season, did not add to the inducements for keeping the house, and so George usually left home each day, and rarely returned to it before nightfall.

It is true he might have associated with Haggerstone, who, on being introduced, made the most courteous advances to his intimacy; but George Onslow was bred in a school whose first lesson is a sensitive shrinking from acquaintance, and whose chief characteristic is distrust. Now he either had heard, or fancied he had heard, something about Haggerstone. "The Colonel wasn't all right," some how or other. There was a story about him, or somebody of his set, and, in fact, it was as well to be cautious; and so the young Guardsman, who would have ventured his neck in a steeple-chase, or his fortune on a "Derby," exhibited all the deliberative wisdom of a judge as to the formation of a passing acquaintance.

If we have been somewhat prolix in explaining the reasons of the young gentleman's solitude, our excuse is, that he had thereby conveyed, not alone all that we know, but all that is necessary to be known of his character. He was one of a class so large in the world, that few people could not count some half-dozen, at least, similar amongst their acquaintance; and all of whom would be currently set down as incapables, if it were not that now and then, every ten years or so, one of these well-looking, well-bred, indolent dandies, as if tired of his own weariness, turns out to be either a dashing soldier, with a heart to dare, and a head to devise the boldest achievements,

or a politic leader, with resources of knowledge, and a skill in debate, to confront the most polished and practised veteran in "the Commons."

Our own experiences of our own day show that these are no paradoxical speculations. But we must not pursue the theme further; and have only to add, that the reader is not to believe that George Onslow formed one of these brilliant exceptions. Whether the fault lies more in himself, or in us, we must not inquire.

If his lonely walks did not suggest any pleasant reveries, the past did not bring any more agreeable tidings. Dry statements from Mr. Orson, his lawyer — every young man about town has his lawyer now-a-days — about the difficulty of arranging his affairs, being the chief intelligence he received, with, from time to time, a short and pithy epistle from a certain noble creditor, Lord Norwood, who, although having won very large sums from Onslow, never seemed in such pressing difficulty as since his good fortune.

The Viscount's style epistolary was neither so marked by originality, nor so worthy of imitation, that it would be worth communicating; but as one of his letters bears slightly upon the interests of our story, we are induced to give it; and being, like all his correspondence, very brief, we will communicate it *in extenso*.

"Oh, Norwood again!" said Onslow, as he looked at the seal, and read the not very legible autograph in the corner. "My noble friend does not give a very long respite;" and biting his lip in some impatience, he opened the paper, and read:

"Dear Onslow,

"Orson has paid me the two thousand, as you ordered, but positively refuses the seventeen hundred and eighty, the Ascot affair, because I cannot give up the original two bills for twelve hundred passed to me for that debt. I told him that they were thrown into the fire, being devilishly tempted to illustrate the process with himself, six months ago, when you gave the renewals; but all won't do, the old prig persists in his demand, to comply with which is clearly impossible, for I have not even preserved the precious ashes of the incremation. I don't doubt, but that legally speaking, and in pettifogging parlance, he is all correct — but between men of honour, such strictness is downright absurdity — and as Dillhurst says — 'something more.' Now, my dear boy, you must write to him — and at once, too — for I'm in a bad book about 'Chanticleer,' who *is* to win it seems — after all — and say that he is acting in direct opposition to your wishes — as of course he is — that the money must be paid without more chaffing. The delay has already put me to great inconvenience, and I know how you will be provoked at his obstinacy. — You've heard 'I suppose,' that Brentwood is going to marry Lydia Vaughan; she has thirty thousand pounds, which is exactly what Jack lost last winter. Crosbie says he ought to 'run away from her — after the start — as he carries no weight:' which is somewhat of my own opinion. What any man has to do with a wife, now-a-days, with the funds at eighty-two, and a dark horse first favourite for the Oaks, is more than I know. Doncaster has levanted, and the Red House folk will smart for it; he would back

Hayes' lot, and there 's nothing can ever set him right again. By the way, Orson hints that if I give him a release, or something of that sort, with respect to the bills, he 'd pay the cash — but this is only a dodge, to make a case for lawyers' parchments, stamps, and so forth; so I won't stand it. Your writing to him will do the whole thing at once. What a jolly world it would be, old fellow, if the whole race of Orsons were carried off by the Cholera, or anything akin. They are the greatest enemies to human peace in existence.

"Believe me, yours, most faithfully,

"Norwood.

"P. S. — I half fancy Baden is empty by this; but if you chance upon a little fellow — heaven knows to whom he belongs, or whence he comes — called Albert Jekyl, will you tell him that I 'll forward the twenty pounds whenever I win the Oaks, or marry Miss Home Greville, or any other similar piece of good fortune. When he lent me the cash, I don't believe he was the owner of as much more in the world; but it suited him to have a viscount in his debt — a devilish bad investment if he knew but all. The chances therefore are that he has foundered long ago, and you will be spared the trouble of the explanation; but if he survive, say something apologetic, for letter-writing and foreign postage are only making bad worse."

Although, unquestionably, the postscript of this elegant epistle was the part which reflected most severely upon the writer's good feeling and sense of honour, George Onslow was more struck by what related to

his own affairs, nor was it till after the lapse of some days that he took the trouble of considering the paragraph, or learning the name of the individual referred to. Even then all that he could remember was, that he had seen or heard the name "somewhere," and thus, very possibly, the whole matter would have glided from his memory, if accident had not brought up the recollection.

Returning one evening later than usual from his solitary walk, he found that the hotel was closed, the door strongly secured, and all the usual precautions of the night taken, in the belief that the inmates were already safe within doors. In vain he knocked and thundered at the massive panels; the few servants occupied rooms at a distance, and heard nothing of the uproar; he shouted, he screamed, he threw gravel against the windows, and, in his zeal, smashed them too. All was fruitless; nobody stirred; nor could he detect the slightest sign of human presence in the vast and dreary-looking building before him. The prospect was not a pleasant one; and a December night, in the open air, was by no means desirable; and yet, where should he turn for shelter? The other hotels were all closed and deserted, and even of the private houses not one in twenty was inhabited. Resolving to give himself one chance more for admission, he scaled the paling of the garden and reached the rear of the hotel; but here all his efforts proved just as profitless as the former, and he was at last about to abandon all hope, when he caught sight of a faint gleam of light issuing from a small window on the first floor. Having failed to attract notice by all his cries and shouts, he determined to reach the window, to which,

fortunately, a large vine, attached to the wall, offered an easy access. George was an expert climber, and in less than a minute found himself seated on the window-sill, and gazing into a room, by the aperture between the half-closed shutters. His first impression on looking in was, that it was a servant's room. The bare, whitewashed walls — the humble, uncurtained bed — three chairs, of coarse wood — all strengthened this suspicion, even to the table, covered by a coarse table-cloth, and one which stood a meal — if meal it could be called — an anchorite might have eaten on Friday. A plate of the common brown bread of the country was balanced by a little dish of radishes, next to which stood a most diminutive piece of Baden cheese, and a capacious decanter of water — a long-wicked tallow candle throwing its gloomy gleam over the whole. For a moment or two George was unable to detect the owner of this simple repast, as he was engaged in replenishing his fire; but he speedily returned, and took his place at the table, spreading his napkin before him, and surveying the board with an air of self-satisfaction, such as a gourmand might bestow upon the most perfect *petit dîner*. In dress, air, and look, he was thoroughly gentlemanlike; a little foppish perhaps in the arrangement of his hair, and somewhat too much display in the jewelled ornaments that studded his neckloth; even in his attitude, as he sat at the table, there was a certain air of studied elegance that formed a curious contrast with the miserable meal before him. Helping himself to a small portion of cheese, and filling out a goblet of that element which neither cheers nor inebriates, he proceeded to eat his supper. Onslow looked on with

a mingled sense of wonder and ridicule, and while half-disposed to laugh at the disparity of the entertainment and him who partook of it, there was something in the scene which repressed his scorn and rendered him even an interested spectator of what went forward. The piercing cold of the night at length admonished him that he should provide for his own admission into the hotel; and although nothing was now easier than to make his presence known, yet he felt a natural reluctance at the pain he must occasion to the stranger, whose frugal mode of living and humble interior would be thus so unceremoniously exposed. The chances are, thought George, that these privations are only endurable because they are practised in secret, and at no sacrifice of worldly estimation. How can I then — or what right have I — to inflict the torture of an exposure upon this young man, whoever he is? The conclusion was very rapidly come to, and not less speedily acted upon; for he determined to spend the night, if need be, in the open air, rather than accept an alternative so painful in its consequences. His resolutions had usually not long to await their accomplishment; and, turning his back to the window, and disdaining the slow process by which he had gained the ascent, he sprang with one leap down to the ground: in doing so, however, his elbow struck the window; and at the same instant that he reached the earth the shivered fragments of a pane of glass came clattering after him. In a moment the sash was thrown open and a head appeared above. "I have smashed the window," cried George, in French, as the only means of being heard. "They have locked me out of the hotel, and I don't fancy

spending a winter's night in walking the streets of Baden."

"You're an Englishman?" said the voice from above, in English.

"Yes; but I don't see what that has to do with the matter," replied Onslow, testily; "even a Laplander might prefer shelter in such a season."

"If you 'll have the goodness to come round to the front door," said the voice — one of the very softest and meekest of voices — "I shall have great pleasure in opening it for you." And at the same time the unknown held forth his candle in polite guidance to the other's steps.

"Thanks, thanks; never mind the light. I know the way perfectly," said George, not a little ashamed at the contrast between his own gruffness and the courtesy of the stranger whose window he had broken.

Onslow had barely time to reach the front door of the inn, when it was opened for him, and he saw before him a very dapper little figure, who, with a profusion of regrets at not having heard him before, offered his candle, a wax one on this occasion, for George's accommodation. Protesting that the broken pane was not of the slightest inconvenience — that the room was a small dressing closet — that it was not worth a moment's thought and so forth, he permitted Onslow to escort him to the door of his room, and then wished him a good night. The scene scarcely occupied the time we have taken to relate it, and yet in that very short space George Onslow had opportunity to see that the unknown had all the easy deportment and quiet breeding of one accustomed to good society. There was, perhaps, a little excess of courtesy, at least ac-

cording to that school of politeness in which Onslow had been taught; but this might be the effect of living abroad, where such a tone usually prevailed. The urbanity was not exactly cold enough for George's notions. No matter, "he's no snob, that's clear, thought he, and even if we were, he's done me good service;" and with this blending of selfishness and speculation he went to sleep, and slept soundly, too, not harassed by even a thought of him, who passed an hour in the effort to repair his broken window, and shivered the rest of the night through from the insufficiency of his skill.

Blessed immunity theirs, who so easily forget the pain they occasion others, and who deem all things trifles that cost themselves no after-thought of regret. Happy the nature that can without self-repining spill the wine over Aunt Betty's, one, "peach-coloured satin," or in careless mood pluck the solitary flower of her only geranium. Enviable stoicism that mislays the keepsake of some poor widow, or lames the old curate's cob, the fond companion of many rambles. These, whatever others think, are very enviable traits, and enable the possessors to wear placid countenances, and talk in most meritorious strain on the blessings of equanimity and the excellent fruits of well-trained mind.

CHAPTER XII.

Mr. Albert Jekyl.

Onslow's first thought, on awaking the next morning, was of last night's acquaintance, but all the information he could obtain concerning him, was that he was an Englishman who had passed the summer in Baden, and during the season knew and was known by every one. The waiter called him, in the usual formulary, "a very nice gentleman;" and seemed by his manner to infer that any further account might be had by — paying for it. Onslow, if he even understood the hint, was not the man to avail himself of it, so he simply ordered him to bring the hotel book, in which the names of all travellers are inscribed, and at once discovered that the proprietor of the humble "*entresol*," No. 6, was a Mr. Albert Jekyl, with the ordinary qualification attached to him of "Rentier Anglais." Searching back in the same instructive volume, he found that on his arrival in June, Mr. Jekyl had occupied a small apartment on the first floor, from which he had subsequently removed to the second; thence to a single room in the third story, and finally settled down in the quiet seclusion of the small chamber where George had first seen him. These were very small materials from which to compile a history, but at least they conveyed one inference, and that a very common one — that the height of Mr. Jekyl's fortune and that of his dwelling observed to

each other an inverse proportion, and that as his *means* went down, *he* went up. If, then, no very valuable contribution to the gentleman's history was contained here, at least the page recorded his name; and George, re-opening Norwood's letter, satisfied himself that this was the same confiding individual who had entrusted the noble viscount with a loan of twenty pounds. George now remembered to have seen his card on Lady Hester's table, with inquiry after Sir Stafford. "Poor fellow!" thought he; "another victim of 'trente-et-un.' They have cleared him out at the tables, and he is either ashamed to write home, or his friends have refused to assist him. And Norwood, too, — the heartlessness of putting to contribution a poor young fellow like this!" Onslow thought worse of this than of fifty other sharp things of the noble lord's doing, and of some of which he had been himself the victim.

"I 'll call upon him this very morning!" said George, half aloud, and with the tone and air of a man who feels he has said a very generous thing, and expressed a sentiment that he is well aware will expose him to a certain amount of reprobation. "Jekyl, after all, is a right good name. Lady Hester said something about Jekyls that she knew, or was related to. Good style of fellow — he looked a little Tigerish, but that comes of the Continent. If he be really presentable, too, my Lady will be glad to receive him in her present state of destitution. Norwood's ungracious message was a bore to be sure, but then he need not deliver it — there was no necessity of taking trouble to be disagreeable — or better again — far better," thought he, and he burst out laughing at the happy

notion, "I 'll misunderstand his meaning, and pay the money. An excellent thought; for as I am about to book up a heavy sum to his Lordship, it 's only deducting twenty pounds and handing it to Jekyl, and I 'll be sworn he wants it most of us all."

The more Onslow reflected on it the more delighted was he with this admirable device; and it is but fair to add, that however gratified at the opportunity of doing a kindness, he was even better pleased at the thought of how their acquaintance at the "Grosvenor" and the "Ultras" would laugh at the "sharp viscount's being sold." There was only one man of all Onslow's set on whom he would have liked to practise this jest, and that man was Norwood. Having decided upon his plan, he next thought of the execution of it, and this he determined should be by letter. A short note, conveying Norwood's message and the twenty pounds, would save all explanation, and spare Jekyl any unpleasant feeling the discussion of a private circumstance might occasion.

Onslow's note concluded with his "thanks for Mr. Jekyl's kindness on the preceding evening," and expressing a wish to know, "at what hour Mr. J. would receive a visit from him."

Within a very few minutes after the billet was despatched, a servant announced Mr. Albert Jekyl, and that young gentleman, in the glory of a very magnificent brocade dressing-gown, and a Greek cap, with slippers of black velvet, embroidered in gold, entered the room.

Onslow, himself a distinguished member of that modern school of dandyism whose pride lies in studs and shirt-pins, in watch-chains, rings, and jewelled

canes, was struck by the costly elegance of his visitor's toilet. The opal buttons at his wrists; the single diamond, of great size and brilliancy, on his finger — even the massive amber mouthpiece of the splendid meerschaum he carried in his hand, were all evidences of the most expensive tastes. "Could this by possibility be the man he had seen at supper?" was the question he at once asked himself; but there was no time to discuss the point, as Jekyl, in a voice almost girlish in its softness, said —

"I could not help coming at once to thank you, Mr. Onslow, for your polite note, and say how gratified I feel at making your acquaintance. Maynard often spoke of you to me; and I confess I was twenty times a day tempted to introduce myself."

"Maynard — Sir Horace Maynard!" cried Onslow, with a slight flush — half pleasure, half surprise; for the baronet was the leader of the set George belonged to — a man of great fortune, ancient family, the most successful on the English turf, and the envy of every young fellow about town. "Do you know Maynard?"

"Oh, very well indeed," lisped Jekyl; "and like him much."

Onslow could not help a stare at the man who, with perfect coolness and such an air of patronage, professed his opinion of the most distinguished fashionable of the day.

"He has a very pretty taste in equipage," continued Jekyl; "but never could attain to the slightest knowledge of a dinner."

Onslow was thunderstruck. Maynard, whose entertainments were the triumph of the Clarendon, thus

criticised by the man he had seen supping like a mouse on a morsel of mouldy cheese!

"Talking of dinners, by the way," said Jekyl, "what became of Merewater?"

"Lord Merewater? — he was in waiting when we left England."

"A very tidy cook he used to have — a Spaniard called José — a perfect hand at all the Provençal dishes. Good creature, Merewater. Don't you think so?"

Onslow muttered a kind of half-assent; and added, "I don't know him." Indeed, the lord in question was reputed as insufferably proud, and as rarely admitting a commoner to the honour of his acquaintance.

"Poor Merewater! I remember playing him such a trick: to this hour he does not know who did it. I stole the 'menu' of one of his grand dinners, and gave it to old Lord Bristock's cook — a creature that might have made the messes for an emigrant ship — and such a travestie of an entertainment never was seen. Merewater affected illness, and went away from the table firmly persuaded that the whole was got up to affront him."

"I thought the Earl of Bristock lived well and handsomely," said George.

"Down at Brentwood it was very well — one was in the country — and grouse and woodcocks, and salmon and pheasants, came all naturally and seasonably; besides, he really had some very remarkable Burgundy; and, though few people will drink it now-a-days, Chambertin *is* a Christmas wine."

The cheese and the decanter of water were uppermost in George's mind, but he said nothing, suffering his companion to run on, which he did, over a wide

expanse of titled and distinguished families, with all of whom he appeared to have lived on the closest terms of intimacy. Certainly of those Onslow himself knew Jekyl related twenty little traits and tokens that showed he was speaking with true knowledge of the parties. Unlike Haggerstone, he rarely, if ever, alluded to any of those darker topics which form the staple of scandal. A very gentle ridicule of some slight eccentricity, a passing quiz of some peculiarity in dress, voice, or manner, was about the extent of Jekyl's criticism, which on no occasion betrayed any malice. Even the oddities that he portrayed were usually done by some passing bit of mimicry of the individual in question. These he threw into the dialogue of his story, without halt or impediment, and which being done with great command of face, and a most thorough appreciation of humour, were very amusing little talents, and contributed largely to his social success. Onslow laughed heartily at many of the imitations, and thus recognised characters that were introduced into a narrative, without the trouble of announcing them.

"You 've heard, perhaps, the series of mishaps which compelled us to take refuge here," said George, leading the way to what he supposed would induce an equal degree of communicativeness on the other side.

"Oh! yes, the landlord told me of your disasters."

"After all, I believe the very worst of them was coming to this place in such a season."

"It is certainly seeing it '*en papillote*,'" said Jekyl, smiling, "and you perhaps are not an admirer of beauty unadorned."

"Say, rather, of nature at her ugliest — for what-

ever it may be in summer, with foliage, and clear streams, flowers, smart folk airing and driving about, equipage, music, movement, and merry voices — now, it is really too dismal. Pray, how do you get through the day?"

Jekyl smiled one of his quiet, equivocal smiles, and slightly raised his shoulders without speaking.

"Do you shoot?"

"No," said he.

"But why do I ask — there's nothing to shoot. You ride then."

"No.'

"Cigars will do a great deal; but confound it, there must be a large share of the day very heavy on your hands, even with a reasonable allowance for reading and writing."

"Seldom do either!" said Jekyl, with his usual, imperturbed manner.

"You havn't surely got up a flirtation with some '*Fräulein* with yellow hair'?"

"I cannot lay claim to such good fortune. I really do nothing. I have not even the usual English resource of a terrier to jump over my stick, nor was I early enough initiated into the mystery of brandy and water — in fact, a less occupied individual cannot well be imagined; but somehow — you'll smile if I say — I am not bored."

"It would be very ungenerous, then, to conceal your secret," cried Onslow; "for assuredly, the art of killing time here, without killing one's self, is worth knowing."

"The misfortune is, I cannot communicate it; that is, even giving me credit for possessing one, my skill

is like that of some great medical practitioner, who has learnt to look on disease with such practised eyes, that the appropriate remedy rises as it were instinctively to his mind, — he knows not how or why, — and who dies, without being able to transmit the knowledge to a successor. I have, somewhat in the same way, become an accomplished idler; and with such success, that the dreariest day of rain that ever darkened the dirty windows of a village inn, the most scorching dog-day that ever emptied the streets of an Italian city, and sent all the inhabitants to their siesta, never hipped me. I have spent a month with perfect satisfaction in quarantine, and bobbed for three weeks in a calm at sea, with no other inconvenience than the moans of my fellow-passengers. There's no secret in it, Mr. Onslow; or, if there be, it lies in this pretty discovery, that we are always bored by our habit of throwing ourselves on the resources of somebody else, who, in his turn, looks out for another, and so on. Now, a man in a fever never dreams of cooling his hand by laying it on another patient's cheek; yet this is what we do. To be thoroughly bored, you must associate yourself with some half-dozen tired, weary, dyspeptic twaddles, and make up a joint-stock bank of your several incapacities, learn to growl in chorus, and you'll be able to go home and practise it, as a solo."

"And have you been completely alone here, of late?" said George, who began to feel that the sermon on "ennui" was not unaccompanied by a taste of the evil.

"Occasionally I've chatted for half an hour with two gentlemen, who reside here — a Colonel Haggerstone —"

"By the way, who is he?" broke in Onslow, eagerly.

"He has been traced back to Madras, but the most searching inquiries have failed to elicit anything further."

"Is he the man they called Arlington's Colonel Haggerstone?"

Jekyl nodded; but with an air that seemed to say, he would not enter more deeply into the subject.

"And your other companion — who is he?"

"Peter Dalton, of — I am ashamed to say — I forget where," said Jekyl; who, at once assuming Dalton's bloated look, in a well-feigned Irish accent, went on: "a descendant of as ancient and as honourable a familee as any in the three kingdoms, and if a little down in the world — bad luck to them that done it! — just as ready as ever he was, to enjoy agreeable society and the ganial flow of soul."

"He's the better of the two, I take it," said Onslow.

"More interesting, certainly — just as a ruined chateau is a more picturesque object than a new police-station, or a cut-stone penitentiary. There's another feature also which ought to give him the preference. I have seen two very pretty faces from time to time as I have passed the windows, and which I conjecture to belong to his daughters."

"Have you not made their acquaintance?" asked Onslow, in some surprise.

"I grieve to say I have not," sighed Jekyl, softly.

"Why the matter should not be very difficult, one might opine, in such a place, at such a time, and with —"

He hesitated, and Jekyl added —

"With such a Papa, you were about to say. Well, that is precisely the difficulty. Had my excellent friend, Peter, been a native of any other country, I flatter myself I should have known how to make my advances; but with these dear Irish their very accessibility is a difficulty of no common order. Assume an air of deference and respect, and they'll set you down for a cold formalist, with whom they can have nothing in common. Try the opposite line, and affect the free-and-easy, and the chances are that you have a duel to fight before you know you have offended. I confess that I have made several small advances, and thrown out repeated little hints about loneliness, and long evenings, and so forth; and although he has concurred with me in every word, yet his practice has never followed his precept. But I don't despair. What say you, if we attack the fortress as allies? I have a notion we should succeed."

"With all my heart. What's your plan?"

"At this moment I have formed none, nor is there need of any. Let us go out, like the knight-errants of old, in search of adventures, and see if they will not befall us. The first step will be to make Dalton's acquaintance. Now, he always takes his walk in bad weather in the great Saal below; should he not make his appearance there to-day, as he has already absented himself for some days, I'll call to inquire after him at his own house. You'll accompany me. The rest we'll leave to fortune."

Although Onslow could not see that this step could lead to anything beyond a civil reply to a civil demand, he assented readily, and promised to meet his companion at four o'clock the same evening. As for Jekyl,

he took a very different view of the whole transaction, for he knew that while to him there might be considerable difficulty in establishing any footing with the Daltons, the son of the wealthy Baronet would be, in all likelihood, very differently looked on. In presenting *him*, thought he, I shall have become the friend of the family at once. It had often before been his fortune in life to have made valuable acquaintances in this manner; and although the poor Daltons were very unlikely to figure in the category of profitable friends, they would at least afford an agreeable resource against the dulness of wintry evenings, and prevent, what he himself called, the "demoralisation" of absence from female society. Lastly, the scheme promised to establish a close intimacy between Onslow and himself; and here was a benefit worth all the others.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Suspicious Visitor.

How far were the Daltons from suspecting that they were the subject of so much and such varied solicitude, and that, while Lady Hester was fancying to herself all the fashionable beauties whom Kate would eclipse in loveliness, and what an effect charms like hers would produce on society, Sir Stafford was busily concerting with his lawyer the means of effectually benefiting them; and George Onslow — for want of better — speculated, as he smoked, on "the kind of people" they would prove, and wondered whether the scheme were worth the light trouble it was to cost him. Little did they know of all this — little imagine that out-side of their humble roof there lived one — save "dear Frank" — whose thoughts included them. "The purple and fine linen" category of this world cannot appreciate the force of this want of sympathy! They, whose slightest griefs and least afflictions in life are always certain of the consolations of friends, and the even more bland solace of a fashionable physician — whose woes are re-echoed by the *Morning Post*, and whose sorrows are mourned in *Court Journals*, cannot frame to themselves the sense of isolation which narrow fortune impresses. "Poverty," says a classical authority, "has no heavier evil than that it makes men ridiculous." But this wound to self-love, deep and poignant though it be, is light in comparison with the

crushing sense of isolation — that abstraction from sympathy in which poor men live!

The Daltons were seated around Hanserl's bed, silently ministering to the sick man, and watching with deep and anxious interest the laboured respiration and convulsive twitches of his fever. The wild and rapid utterance of his lips, and the strange fancies they syllabled, often exciting him to laughter, only deepened the gravity of their countenances, and cast over the glances they interchanged a tinge of sadder meaning.

"He couldn't have better luck," muttered Dalton, sorrowfully; "just from being a friend to us! If he had never seen nor heard of us, maybe 't is happy and healthy he 'd be to-day!"

"Nay, nay! Papa," said Nelly, gently; "this is to speak too gloomily; nor is it good for us to throw on fortune the burden that we each should bear patiently."

"Don't tell me there is not such a thing as luck!" replied Dalton, in a tone of irritation. "I know well whether there is or no! For five-and-thirty years, whatever I put my hand to in life turned out badly! It was the same whether I did anything on the spur of the moment, or thought over it for weeks. If I wished a thing, that was reason enough for it to come out wrong!"

"And even were it all as you fancy, Papa, dearest," said Nelly, as she fondly drew her arm round him, "is it nothing, that these reverses have found you strong of heart, and high of courage, to bear them? Over and over again have you told me, that the great charm of field sports lay in the sense of fatigue bravely

endured, and peril boldly confronted, that, devoid of these, they were unworthy of men. Is there not a greater glory, then, in stemming the tide of adverse fortune; and is it not a higher victory that carries you triumphant over the real trials of life — kind of heart, trustful, and generous, as in the best days of your prosperity, and with a more gentle and forbearing spirit than prosperity ever taught."

"That 's nothing against what I was saying," said Dalton, but with a more subdued face. "There 's poor little Hans, and till a couple of days ago he never knew what it was to be unlucky. As he told us himself, his life was a fairy tale."

"True," interposed Nelly; "and happy as it was, and blameless, and guileless, he who led it, mark how many a gloomy thought — what dark distressing fancies hover round his brain, and shadow his sick bed! No, no! the sorrows of this world are more equally distributed than we think for, and he who seems to have fewest is oftentimes but he who best conceals them!"

Her voice shook, and became weaker as she spoke; and the last few words were barely audible. Dalton did not notice her emotion; but Kate's looks were bent upon her with an expression of fond and affectionate meaning.

"There 's somebody at the door," whispered Dalton; "see who it is, Kate."

Kate arose, and, opening the door softly, beheld old Andy; his shrivelled features and lustreless eyes appearing in a state of unusual excitement.

"What 's the matter, Andy? — what is it you want?" said she.

"Is the master here? — where's the master?"

"He's here; what do you want with him?" rejoined she.

"I want himself," said he, as with his palsied hand he motioned to Dalton to come out.

"What is it, you old fool?" said Dalton, impatiently, as he arose and followed him outside of the room.

"There's one of them again!" said Andy, putting his mouth to Dalton's ear, and whispering in deep confidence.

"One of what? — one of whom?"

"He's up-stairs," muttered Andy.

"Who's up-stairs? — who is he?" cried Dalton, angrily.

"Didn't I know him the minit I seen him! Ayeh! Ould as I am, my eyes isn't that dim yet."

"God give me patience with you!" said Dalton; and, to judge from his face, he was not entreating a vain blessing. "Tell me, I say, what do you mean, or who is it is up-stairs?"

Andy put his lips once more to the other's ear, and whispered, "an attorney!"

"An attorney!" echoed Dalton.

"Iss!" said Andy, with a significant nod.

"And how do you know he's an attorney?"

"I seen him!" replied the other, with a grin; "and I locked the door on him."

"What for?"

"What for! — what for, is it? Oh! murther, murther!" whined the old creature, who in this unhappy question thought he read the evidence of his poor master's wreck of intellect. It was indeed no

slight shock to him to hear that Peter Dalton had grown callous to danger, and could listen to the terrible word he had uttered without a sign of emotion.

"I seen the papers with a red string round 'em," said Andy, as though by this incidental trait he might be able to realise all the menaced danger.

"Sirrah, ye're an old fool!" said Dalton, angrily, and, jerking the key from his trembling fingers, he pushed past him, and ascended the stairs.

If Dalton's impatience had been excited by the old man's absurd terrors and foolish warnings, his own heart was not devoid of a certain vague dread, as he slowly wended his way upwards. It was true he did not partake of old Andy's fear of the dread official of the law. Andy, who forgetting time and place, not knowing that they were in another land, where the King's writ never ran, saw in the terrible apparition the shadows of coming misfortune. Every calamity of his master's house had been heralded by such a visit, and he could as soon have disconnected the banshee with a sudden death, as the sight of an attorney with an approaching disaster.

It is true, Dalton did not go this far; but still old impressions were not so easily effaced. And as the liberated captive is said to tremble at the clanking of a chain, so his heart responded to the fear that memory called up of past troubles and misfortunes.

"What can he want with me, now?" muttered he, as he stopped to take breath. "They've left me nothing but life; and they can't take *that*. It's not that I'd care a great deal if they did! Maybe, it's more bother about them titles; but I'll not trouble my head

about them. I sold the land, and I spent the money; ay, and what's more, I spent it at home among my own people, like a gentleman! and if I'm an absentee, it's not my fault. I suppose he couldn't arrest me!" said he, after a pause. "But, God knows! they're making new laws every day, and it's hard to say, if they'll let a man have peace or ease in any quarter of the world before long. Well, well! there's no use guessing. I have nothing to sell — nothing to lose; I suppose they don't make it hanging matter, even for an Irishman, to live a trifle too fast." And with this piece of re-assuring comfort, he pulled up his cravat, threw back the breast of his coat, and prepared to confront the enemy bravely.

Although Dalton made some noise in unlocking the door, and not less in crossing the little passage that led to the sitting-room, his entrance was unperceived by the stranger, who was busily engaged in examining a half-finished group by Nelly. It represented an old soldier, whose eyes were covered by a bandage, seated beside a well, while a little drummer-boy read to him the bulletin of a great victory. She had destined the work for a present to Frank, and had put forth all her genius in its composition. The glowing enthusiasm of the blind veteran — his half-opened lips — his attitude of eagerness as he drank in the words, were finely contrasted with the childlike simplicity of the boy, more intent as it seemed in spelling out the lines than following the signification.

If the stranger was not a finished connoisseur, he was certainly not ignorant of art, and was deep in its contemplation when Dalton accosted him.

"I beg pardon — Mr. Dalton, I presume — really this clever composition has made me forget myself, totally. May I ask, is it the work of a native artist?"

"It was done in this place, Sir," replied Dalton, whose pride in his daughter's skill was overlayed by a less worthy feeling — shame, that a Dalton should condescend to such an occupation.

"I have seen very inferior productions highly prized and praised, and if I am not indiscreet —"

"To prevent any risk of that kind," observed Dalton, interrupting him, "I'll take the liberty of asking your name, and the object of this visit."

"Prichard, Sir; of the firm of Prichard and Harding, solicitors, Lincoln's Inn-fields," replied the other, whose voice and manner at once assumed a business-like tone.

"I never heard the names before," said Dalton, motioning to a chair. The stranger seated himself, and, placing a large roll of papers before him on the table, proceeded to untie and arrange them most methodically, and with the air of a man too deeply impressed with the importance of his occupation to waste a thought upon the astonishment of a by-stander.

"Prichard and Harding are mighty cool kind of gentlemen," thought Dalton, as he took his seat at the opposite side of the table, trying, but not with any remarkable success, to look as much at ease as his visitor.

"Copy of deed — draft of instructions — bill of sale of stock — no, here it is! This is what we want," muttered Prichard, half aloud. "I believe that letter, Sir, is in your handwriting?"

Dalton put on his spectacles and looked at the document for a few seconds, during which his countenance gradually appeared to light up with an expression of joyful meaning, for his eye glistened, and a red flush suffused his cheek.

"It is, Sir, — that's mine, every word of it; and what's more, I'm as ready to stand to it to-day, as the hour I wrote it."

Mr. Prichard, scarcely noticing the reply, was again deep in his researches; but the object of them must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

An Embarrassing Question.

How very seldom it is that a man looks at a letter he has written some twenty years or so before, and peruses it with any degree of satisfaction. No matter how pleasurable the theme, or how full of interest at the time, years have made such changes in circumstances, have so altered his relations with the world — dispelled illusions here, created new prospects there — that the chances are he can feel nothing but astonishment for what once were his opinions, and a strange sense of misgiving that he ever could have so expressed himself.

Rare as this pleasure is, we left Mr. Dalton in the fullest enjoyment of it, in our last chapter, and, as he read and re-read his autograph, every feature of his face showed the enjoyment it yielded him.

"My own writing, sure enough! I wish I never put may hand to paper in a worse cause! Isn't it strange, he muttered, how a man's heart will outlive his fingers? I couldn't write now as well as I used then, but I can feel just the same. There's the very words I said." And with this he read, half aloud, from the paper — "'But if you'll consent to send lawyers and attorneys to the devil, and let the matter be settled between us, like two gentlemen, Peter Dalton will meet you, when, where, and how you like, and take the satisfaction as a full release of every claim and demand he makes on you.' Just so! and a fairer

offer never was made, but I grieve to say it wasn't met in the same spirit."

"When you wrote that letter, Mr. Dalton," said Prichard, not looking up from the papers before him, "you were doubtless suffering under the impression of a wrong, at the hands of Sir Stafford Onslow."

"Faith, I believe you. The loss of a fine estate wasn't a trifle, whatever you may think it!"

"The question ought rather to be, what right had you to attribute that loss to *him*."

"What right, is it? All the right in the world. Who got the property? Answer me that. Wasn't it he came in as a sole legatee? But what am I talking about? Sure the thing is done and ended, and what more does he want?"

"I'm just coming to that very point, Sir," said Prichard. "Sir Stafford's attention having been accidentally called to this transaction, he perceives that he has unwittingly done you a great injustice, and that there is one matter, at least, on which he is bound, even for his own satisfaction —"

"Satisfaction, is it?" broke in Dalton, catching at the only word that struck his ear with a distinct signification. "Better late than never, and it's proud I am to oblige him. Not but there's people would tell you that the time's gone by, and all that sort of thing, but them was never my sentiments. 'Never a bad time for a good deed,' my poor father used to say, and you may tell him that I'll think the better of his countrymen to the day of my death for what he's going to do now."

Prichard laid down the paper he was reading, and stared at the speaker in mute amazement.

"You're his friend, I perceive," said Dalton.

"Sir Stafford is kind enough to consider me in that light."

"Faith! the kindness is all the other way," rejoined Dalton, laughing; "at least, in this country, for the seconds are just as guilty here as the principals, and have no fun for their money. But, sure, we can cross over to Landau; they tell me it's Barbaria there, over the Rhine."

"Bavaria, perhaps?" interposed the other.

"Yes, that's what I said. We can be over the frontier in two hours. There's every conveniency in life," said he, rubbing his hands in high glee.

"Our business, I trust, Sir, can be all arranged here, and without much delay, either."

"Just as you like; I'm not fond of moving since my knee was bad, and I'm agreeable to anything."

"You seem to contemplate a hostile meeting, Sir, if I understand you aright," said Prichard, slowly; "but, if you had been kind enough to hear me out, you'd have seen that nothing was further from my friend's thoughts or my own."

"Oh, murther!" groaned Dalton, as he sank down into a chair.

"We never entertained any such intention."

"No duel?"

"Nothing of the kind."

"Sure, I heard you say satisfaction! I'll take my oath you said satisfaction."

"I hope sincerely, Sir, that the word may bear a peaceful signification."

"Oh dear! oh dear!" cried Dalton, as, clasping his hands on his knees, he sat, a perfect type of disap-

pointed hope, and totally inattentive to a very eloquent explanation that Prichard was pouring forth. "You see, now, Sir, I trust," cried the latter, triumphantly, "that if my friend's intentions are not precisely what you looked for, that they are not less inspired by an anxious desire to cultivate your friendship and obtain your good opinion."

"I wasn't listening to a word you were saying," said Dalton, with a sincerity that would have made many men smile; but Mr. Prichard never laughed, or only when the joke was uttered by a silk gown, or the initiative given by the bench itself.

"I was endeavouring, Sir, to convey," said he again, and with infinite patience, "that, by a clause of the late Mr. Godfrey's will, the suggestion was made to the effect that, if Sir Stafford Onslow should deem it fitting and suitable, the testator would not be averse to an annuity of from one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds per annum being settled on Mr. Peter Dalton for the term of his life. This clause has now been brought under Sir Stafford's notice for the first time, as he never, in fact, saw the will before. The document was lodged in our hands; and as certain proceedings, of which the letter you have just acknowledged forms a part, at that period placed you in a peculiar position of hostility to Sir Stafford, we, as his legal advisers, did not take any remarkable pains to impress this recommendation on his memory."

"Go on; I'm listening to you," said Dalton.

"Well, Sir, Sir Stafford is now desirous of complying with this injunction, the terms of which he reads as more obligatory upon him than his legal friends would be willing to substantiate. In fact, he makes

the matter a question of feeling, and not of law; and this, of course, is a point wherein we have no right to interpose an opinion. Something like ten years have elapsed since Mr. Godfrey's death, and taking the sum at two hundred pounds, with interest at five per cent., a balance of above three thousand two hundred will now be at your disposal, together with the annuity on your life; and to arrange the payment of these moneys, and take measures for their future disbursement, I have the honour to present myself before you. As for these letters, they are your own; and Sir Stafford, in restoring them, desires to efface all memory of the transaction they referred to, and to assure you that, when circumstances enable him to meet you, it may be on terms of perfect cordiality and friendship."

"Upon my soul and conscience I don't understand a word of it at all!" said Dalton, whose bewildered looks gave a perfect concurrence to the speech. "Is it that I have a right to all the money?"

"Exactly, Sir; Sir Stafford feels that he is simply carrying out the wishes of your relative, Mr. Godfrey —"

"But this has nothing to do with the little difference between Sir Stafford and myself? I mean, it leaves us just where we were before."

"Sir Stafford hopes that henceforth a better understanding will subsist between you and himself; and that you, seeing how blameless he has been in the whole history of your losses, will receive this act as an evidence of his desire to cultivate your friendship."

"And this two hundred a year?"

"Is Mr. Godfrey's bequest."

"But depending on Sir Stafford to pay or not, as he likes."

"I have already told you, Sir, that he conceives he has no option in the matter; and that the mere expression of a desire on Mr. Godfrey's part becomes to him a direct injunction."

"Faith! he was mighty long in finding it out, then," said Dalton, laughing.

"I believe I have explained myself on that head," replied Prichard; "but I am quite ready to go over the matter again."

"God forbid! my head is 'moidered' enough already, not to make it worse! Explanations, as they call them, always puzzle me more; but if you'd go over the subject to my daughter Nelly, her brain is as clear as the Lord Chancellor's. I'll just call her up here, for, to tell you the truth, I never see my way right in anything till Nelly makes it out for me."

Mr. Prichard was probably not grieved at the prospect of a more intelligent listener, and readily assented to the proposition; in furtherance of which Dalton left the room to seek his daughter.

On descending to the little chamber where he had left the two girls, in waiting beside the Dwarf's sick-bed, he now discovered that they had gone, and that old Andy had replaced them; a change which, to judge from Hanserl's excited looks and wild utterance, was not by any means to his taste.

"Was machst du hier?" cried he, sternly, to the old man.

"Whisht! alannah! Take a sleep, acushla!" whined old Andy, as, under the delusion that it was beside an infant his watch was established, he tried to rock

the settle-bed like a cradle, and then croned away in a cracked voice one of his own native ditties: —

"I saw a man weeping and makin' sad moan,
He was crying and grievin',
For he knew their deceivin',
An' rockin' a cradle for a child not his own."

"Was für katzen jammer! What for cats' music mak'st thou there?"

"Where 's the girls, Andy?" whispered Dalton in the old man 's ear.

"They 're gone," muttered he.

"Gone where? — where did they go?"

"Fort mit ihm. Away with him. Leave him not stay. Mein head is heavy and mein brain turn round!" screamed Hanserl.

"Will ye tell me where they 're gone, I say?" cried Dalton, angrily.

"Hushoo! husho!" sung out the old man, as he fancied he was composing his charge to sleep; and then made signs to Dalton to be still, and not awaken him.

With an angry muttering, Dalton turned away and left the chamber, totally regardless of Hanserl's entreaties to take Andy along with him.

"You 're just good company for each other!" said he, sulkily, to himself. "But where 's these girls, I wonder?"

"Oh, Papa, I have found you at last!" cried Kate, as, bounding down the stairs half-a-dozen steps at a time, she threw her arm round him. "She 's here! she 's up-stairs with us; and so delightful, and so kind, and so beautiful. I never believed any one could be so charming."

"And who is she, when she 's at home?" said Dalton, half sulkily.

"Lady Hester, of course, Papa. She came while we were sitting with Hanserl — came quite alone to see him and us; and when she had talked to him for a while, so kindly and so sweetly, about his wound, and his fever, and his home in the Tyrol, and his mother, and everything, she turned to Nelly, and said, 'Now, my dears, for a little conversation with yourselves. Where shall we go to be quite alone and uninterrupted?' We didn't know what to say, Papa; for we knew that you and the strange gentleman were busy in the sitting-room, and while I was thinking what excuse to make, Nelly told her that our only room was occupied. 'Oh, I don't care for that in the least,' said she; 'let us shut ourselves up in your dressing-room.' Our dressing-room! I could have laughed and cried at the same moment as she said it; but Nelly said that we had none, and invited her up-stairs to her bedroom; and there she is now, Papa, sitting on the little bed, and making Nelly tell her everything about who we are, and whence we came, and how we chanced to be living here."

"I wonder Nelly hadn't more sense," said Dalton, angrily; "not as much as a curtain on the bed, nor a bit of carpet on the floor. What 'll she think of us all!"

"Oh, Papa, you 're quite mistaken; she called it a dear little snuggery; said she envied Nelly so much that lovely view over Eberstein and the Schloss, and said what would she not give to lead our happy and peaceful life, away from that great world she despises

so heartily. How sad to think her duties tie her down to a servitude so distasteful and repulsive!"

"Isn't my lady the least taste in life of a humbug, Kitty?" whispered Dalton, as his eyes twinkled with malicious drollery.

"Papa, Papa! you cannot mean —"

"No harm, if she is, darling. I'm sure the pleasantest, ay, and some of the worthiest people ever I knew, were humbugs; that is, they were always doing their best to be agreeable to the company; and if they strained their consciences a bit, small blame to them for that same."

"Lady Hester is far above such arts, Papa; but you shall judge for yourself. Come in, now, for she is so anxious to know you."

Kate, as she spoke, had opened the door of the little bedroom, and drawing her arm within her father's gently led him forward, to where Lady Hester was seated upon the humble settle.

"It's a nice place they showed you into, my Lady," said Dalton, after the ceremony of introduction was gone through; "and there was the drawing-room, or the library, and the breakfast-parlour, all ready to receive you."

"We heard that you were engaged with a gentleman on business, Papa."

"Well, and if I was, Nelly, transacting a small matter about my estates in Ireland, sure it was in my own study we were."

"I must be permitted to say that I am very grateful for any accident which has given me the privilege of an intimate with my dear young friends," said Lady Hester in her very sweetest of manners; "and

as to the dear little room itself, it is positively charming."

"I wish you'd seen Mount Dalton, my Lady. There's a window, and it isn't bigger than that there, and you can see seven baronies out of it and a part of three counties — Killikelly's flour-mills, and the town of Drumcoolaghan in the distance; not to speak of the Shannon winding for miles through as elegant a bog as ever you set eyes upon."

"Indeed!" smiled her Ladyship, with a glance of deep interest.

"'T is truth I'm telling you, my Lady," continued he; "and, what's more, 't was our own, every stick and stone of it. From Crishnamuck to Ballymodereena on one side, and from the chapel at Dooras down to Drumcoolaghan, 't was the Dalton estate."

"What a princely territory!"

"And why not? Weren't they kings once, or the same as kings. Didn't my grandfather, Pearce, hold a court for life and death in his own parlour? Them was the happy, and the good times too," sighed he, plaintively.

"But I trust your late news from Ireland is favourable?"

"Ah! there isn't much to boast about. The old families is dying out fast, and the properties changing hands. A set of English rogues and bankerfellows, that made their money in dirty lanes and alleys —"

A sort of imploring, beseeching anxiety from his daughter Kate here brought Dalton to a dead stop, and he pulled up as suddenly as if on the brink of a precipice.

"Pray, go on, Mr. Dalton," said Lady Hester, with a winning smile; "you cannot think how much you have interested me. You are aware that we really know nothing about poor dear Ireland; and I am so delighted to learn from one so competent to teach."

"I didn't mean any offence, my Lady," stammered out Dalton in confusion. "There's good and bad everywhere; but I wish to the Lord the cotton-spinners wouldn't come among us, and their steam-engines, and their black chimneys, and their big factories; and they say we're not far from that now."

A gentle tap at the door, which communicated with the sitting-room, was heard at this moment, and Dalton exclaimed,

"Come in!" but, not suffering the interruption to stop the current of his discourse, he was about to resume, when Mr. Prichard's well-powdered head appeared at the door.

"I began to suspect you had forgotten me, Mr. Dalton," said he; but suddenly catching a glimpse of Lady Hester, he stopped to ask pardon for the intrusion.

"Faith, and I just did," said Dalton, laughing; "couldn't you contrive to step in, in the morning, and we'll talk that little matter over again."

"Yes, Prichard; pray don't interrupt us now" said Lady Hester, in a tone of half-peevishness. "I cannot possibly spare you, Mr. Dalton, at this moment;" and the man of law withdrew, with a most respectful obeisance.

"You'll forgive me, won't you?" said she, addressing Dalton, with a glance, whose blandishment had often succeeded in a more difficult case.

"And now, Papa, we 'll adjourn to the drawing-room," said Kate, who somehow continued to notice a hundred deficiencies in the furniture of a little chamber she had often before deemed perfect.

Dalton accordingly offered his arm to Lady Hester, who accepted the courtesy in all form, and the little party moved into the sitting-room; Nelly following, with an expression of sadness in her pale features, very unlike the triumphant glances of her father and sister.

"I 'm certain of *your* pardon, Mr. Dalton, and of *yours*, too, my dear child," said Lady Hester, turning towards Kate, as she seated herself on the stiff old sofa, "when I avow that I have come here determined to pass the evening with you. I 'm not quite so sure that my dear Miss Dalton's forgiveness will be so readily accorded me. I see that she already looks gravely at the prospect of listening to my fiddle-faddle instead of following out her own charming fancies."

"Oh! how you wrong me, my Lady," broke in Nelly, eagerly. "If it were not for my fears of our unfitness — our inability," she stammered, in confusion and shame; and old Dalton broke in,

"Don't mind her, my Lady; we're as well used to company as any family in the country; but you see, we don't generally mix with the people one meets abroad; and why should we? God knows who they are. There was chaps here last summer at the tables you wouldn't let into the servants' hall. There was one I seen myself, with an elegant pair of horses, as nice steppers as ever you looked at, and a groom behind with a leather-strap round him, and a —" — here Mr. Dalton performed a pantomime, by extending

the fingers of his open hand at the side of his head, to represent a cockade — "what d'ye call it — in his hat; and who was he, did you think? 'Billy Rogers,' of Muck; his father was in the canal —"

"In the canal!" exclaimed Lady Hester, in affright.

"Yes, my Lady; in the Grand Canal, — an inspector at forty pounds a year, — the devil a farthin' more; and if you seen the son here, with two pins in his cravat, and a gold chain twisting and turning over his waistcoat, with his hat on one side, and yellow gloves, new every morning, throwing down the 'Naps' at that thieving game they call 'Red and Black,' you 'd say he was the Duke of Leinster!"

"Was he so like his Grace?" asked Lady Hester, with a delightful simplicity.

"No; but grander!" replied Dalton, with a wave of his hand.

"It is really as you remark, very true," resumed her Ladyship; "it is quite impossible to venture upon an acquaintance out of England; and I cordially concur in the caution you practise."

"So I'm always telling the girls, — 'better no company than trumpery!' not that I don't like a bit of sociality as well as ever I did, — a snug little party of one's own, — people whose fathers and mothers had names, — the real old stock of the land. But to be taking up with every chance rapscallion you meet on the cross-roads, — to be hand and glove with this, that, and the other, them never was my sentiments."

It is but justice to confess there was less of hypocrisy in the bland smile Lady Hester returned to this speech than might be suspected; for, what between

the rapidity of Dalton's utterance, and the peculiar accentuation he gave to certain words, she did not really comprehend one syllable of what he said. Meanwhile, the two girls sat silent and motionless. Nelly, in all the suffering of shame at the absurdity of her father's tone, — the vulgarity of an assumption she had fondly hoped years of poverty might have tamed down, if not obliterated; Kate, in mute admiration of their lovely visitor, of whose graces she never wearied. Nor did Lady Hester make any effort to include them in the conversation; she had come out expressly for one sole object, — to captivate Mr. Dalton; and she would suffer nothing to interfere with her project. To this end, she heard his long and tiresome monologues about Irish misery and distress, narrated with an adherence to minute and local details, that made the whole incomprehensible; she listened to him with well-feigned interest, in his narratives of the Daltons of times long past, — of their riotous and extravagant living, their lawlessness, and their daring; nor did she permit her attention to flag while he recounted scenes and passages of domestic annals, that might almost have filled a page of savage history.

"How sorry you must have felt to leave a country so dear by all its associations and habits," sighed she, as he finished a narrative of more than ordinary horrors.

"Ain't I breaking my heart over it? Ain't I fretting myself to mere skin and bone?" said he, with a glance of condolence over his portly figure. "But what could I do? I was forced to come out here for the education of the children — bother it — for education! — but it ruins everybody now-a-days.

When I was a boy, reading and writing, with a trifle of figures, was enough for any one. If you could tell what twenty bullocks cost, at two pounds four and sixpence a beast, and what was the price of a score of hoggets, at fifteen shillings a-head, and wrote your name and address in a good round hand, 't was seldom you needed more; but now you have to learn everything — ay, sorrow bit, but it's learning the way to do what every one knows by nature — riding — dancing — no, but even walking, I'm told, they teach, too! Then there's French, you must learn, for talking! — and Italian to sing! — and German — upon my soul, I believe it's to snore in! — and what with music, dancing and drawing, everybody is brought up like a play-actor."

"There is, as you remark, far too much display in modern education, Mr. Dalton; but you would seem fortunate enough to have avoided the error. A young lady whose genius can accomplish such a work as this —"

"'T is one of Nelly's, sure enough," said he, looking at the group to which she pointed, but feeling even more shame than pride in the avowal.

The sound of voices — a very unusual noise — from the door without, now broke in upon the conversation, and Andy's cracked treble could be distinctly heard in loud altercation.

"Nelly! Kitty! I say," cried Dalton, "see what's the matter with that old devil. There's something come over him to-day, I think, for he won't be quiet for two minutes together."

Kate accordingly hastened to discover the cause

of a tumult in which now the sound of laughter mingled.

As *we*, however, enjoy the prerogative of knowing the facts before they could reach *her*, we may as well inform the reader that Andy, whose intelligence seemed to have been preternaturally awakened by the sight of an attorney, had been struck by seeing two strangers enter the house-door and leisurely ascend the stairs. At such a moment, and with his weak brain filled with its latest impression, the old man at once set them down as bailiffs come to arrest his master. He hobbled after them, therefore, as well as he could, and just reached the landing as Mr. Jekyl, with his friend Onslow, had arrived at the door.

"Mr. Dalton lives here, I believe," said Jekyl.

"Anan," muttered Andy, who, although he heard the question, affected not to have done so, and made this an excuse for inserting himself between them and the door.

"I was asking if Mr. Dalton lived here?" cried Jekyl louder, and staring with some astonishment at the old fellow's manœuvre.

"Who said he did, eh?" said Andy, with an effort at fierceness.

"Perhaps it 's on the lower story?" asked Onslow.

"Maybe it is, and maybe it isn't, then!" was the answer.

"We wish to see him, my good man," said Jekyl; "or, at least, to send a message to him."

"Sure! I know well enough what ye want," said Andy, with a wave of his hand. "'T isn't the first of yer like I seen!"

"And what may that be," asked Onslow, not a little amused by the blended silliness and shrewdness of the old man's face.

"Ayeh! I know yez well," rejoined he, shaking his head. "Be off, then, and don't provoke the house! Away wid yez, before the servants sees ye."

"This is a rare fellow," said Onslow, who, less interested than his companion about the visit, was quite satisfied to amuse himself with old Andy. "So you 'll not even permit us to send our respects, and ask how your master is?"

"I 'm certain you 'll be more reasonable," simpered Jekyl, as he drew a very weighty-looking purse from his pocket, and, with a considerable degree of ostentation, seemed preparing to open it.

The notion of bribery, and in such a cause, was too much for Andy's feelings; and, with a sudden jerk of his hand, he dashed the purse out of Jekyl's fingers, and scattered the contents all over the landing and stairs. "Ha, ha!" cried he, wildly, "'t is only ha'pence he has after all!" And the taunt was so far true that the ground was strewn with kreutzers and other copper coins of the very smallest value.

As for Onslow, the scene was too ludicrous for him any longer to restrain his laughter; and although Jekyl laughed too, and seemed to relish the absurdity of his mistake, as he called it, having put in his pocket a collection of rare and curious coins, his cheek, as he bent to gather them up, was suffused with a deeper flush than the mere act of stooping should occasion. It was precisely at this moment that Kate Dalton made her appearance.

"What is the matter, Andy?" asked she, turning

to the old man, who appeared, by his air and attitude, as if determined to guard the doorway.

"Two spalpeens, that want to take the master; that's what it is," said he, in a voice of passion.

"Your excellent old servant has much mistaken us, Miss Dalton," said Jekyl, with his most deferential of manners. "My friend, Captain Onslow" — here he moved his hand towards George, who bowed — "and myself, having planned a day's shooting in the 'Moorg,' have come to request the pleasure of Mr. Dalton's company."

"Oh, the thievin' villains!" muttered Andy; "that's the way they'll catch him."

Meanwhile Kate, having promised to convey their polite invitation, expressed her fears that her father's health might be unequal to the exertion. Jekyl immediately took issue upon the point, and hoped, and wondered, and fancied, and "flattered himself" so much, that Kate at last discovered she had been drawn into a little discussion, when she simply meant to have returned a brief answer; and while she was hesitating how to put an end to an interview that had already lasted too long, Dalton himself appeared.

"Is it with me these gentlemen have their business?" said he, angrily, while he rudely resisted all Andy's endeavours to hold him back.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Dalton," cried Jekyl, warmly, "it is such a pleasure to see you quite restored to health again! Here we are — Captain Onslow, Mr. Dalton — thinking of a little excursion after the woodcocks down the Moorg Thal; and I have been indulging the hope that you'll come along with us."

The very hint of an attention, the merest sugges-

tion that bordered on a civility, struck a chord in old Dalton's nature that moved all his sympathies. It was at once a recognition of himself and his ancestry for generations back; it was a rehabilitation of all the Daltons of Mount Dalton for centuries past; and as he extended a hand to each, and invited them to walk in, he half felt himself at home again, doing the honours of his house, and extending those hospitalities that had brought him to beggary.

"Are you serious about the shooting party?" whispered Onslow to Jekyl, as he walked forward.

"Of course not. It's only a 'Grecian horse,' to get inside the citadel."

"My daughter, Miss Dalton; Mr. Jekyl — Miss Kate Dalton. Your friend's name, I believe, is —"

"Captain Onslow."

Lady Hester started at the name, and, rising, at once said,

"Oh, George! *I* must introduce you to my fair friends. Miss Dalton, this gentleman calls me 'mamma;' or, at least, if he does not, it is from politeness. Captain Onslow — Mr. Dalton. Now, by what fortunate event came you here?"

"Ought I not to ask the same question of your Ladyship?" said George, archly.

"If you like; only that, as I asked first —"

"You shall be answered first. Lady Hester Onslow, allow me to present Mr. Albert Jekyl."

"Oh, indeed!" drawled out Lady Hester, as, with her very coldest bow, she surveyed Mr. Jekyl through her glass, and then turned away to finish her conversation with Ellen.

Jekyl was not the man to feel a slight repulse as a defeat; but, at the same time, saw that the present was not the moment to risk an engagement. He saw, besides, that, by engaging Dalton in conversation, he should leave Lady Hester and Onslow at liberty to converse with the two sisters, and, by this act of generosity, entitle himself to gratitude on all sides. And, after all, among the smaller martyrdoms of this life, what self-sacrifice exceeds his who, out of pure philanthropy, devotes himself to the "bore" of the party. Honour to him who can lead the forlorn hope of this stronghold of weariness. Great be his praises who can turn from the seductive smiles of beauty, and the soft voices of youth, and only give eye and ear to the tiresome and uninteresting. High among the achievements of unobtrusive heroism should this claim rank; and if you doubt it, my dear reader, if you feel disposed to hold cheaply such darings, try it — try even for once. Take your place beside that deaf old lady in the light auburn wig, or draw your chair near to that elderly gentleman, whose twinkling grey eyes and tremulous lip bespeak an endless volubility on the score of personal reminiscences. Do this, too, within ear-shot of pleasant voices and merry laughter — of that tinkling ripple that tells of conversation flowing lightly on, like a summer-stream, clear where shallow, and reflective where deep! Listen to the wearisome bead-roll of family fortunes — the births, deaths, and marriages of those you never saw, and hoped never to see — hear the long narratives of past events, garbled, mistaken, and misstated, with praise and censure ever missapplied, and then, I say, you will feel that, although such actions are not rewarded with red ribbons

or blue, they yet demand a moral courage and a perseverance that in wider fields win high distinction.

Albert Jekyl was a proficient in this great art; indeed, his powers developed themselves according to the exigency, so that the more insufferably tiresome his companion, the more seemingly attentive and interested did he become. His features were, in fact, a kind of "Bore-ometer," in which, from the liveliness of the expression, you might calculate the stupidity of the tormentor; and the mercury of his nature rose, not fell, under pressure. And so you would have said had you but seen him that evening, as seated beside Dalton, he heard, for hours long, how Irish gentlemen were ruined and their fortunes squandered. What jolly times they were, when men resisted the law and never feared a debt! Not that while devouring all the "rapparee" experiences of the father he had no eye for the daughters, and did not see what was passing around him. Ay, that did he, and mark well, how Lady Hester attached herself to Kate Dalton, flattered by every sign of her unbought admiration, and delighted with the wondering homage of the artless girl. He watched Onslow, too, turn from the inanimate charms of Nelly's sculptured figures, to gaze upon the long dark lashes and brilliant complexion of her sister. He saw all the little comedy that went on around him, even to poor Nelly's confusion, as she assisted Andy to arrange a tea-table, and, for the first time since their arrival, proceed to make use of that little service of white and gold which, placed on a marble table for show, constitutes the invariable decoration of every humble German drawing-room. He even overheard her, as she left the room, giving Andy her directions a dozen times over, how he was to pro-

cure the tea, and the sugar, and the milk — extravagances she did not syllable without a sigh. He saw and heard everything, and rapidly drew his own inferences, not alone of their poverty, but of their unfitness to struggle with it.

"And yet, I'd wager, these people," said he to himself, "are revelling in superfluities; at least, as compared to *me!* But, so it is, the rock that one man ties round his neck, another would make a stepping stone of!" This satisfactory conclusion gave additional sweetness to the bland smile with which he took his tea-cup from Nelly's hand, while he pronounced the beverage the very best he had ever tasted out of Moscow. And so we must leave the party.

CHAPTER XV.

Contrasts.

"So you think, Grounsell, I may be able to leave this in a day or two?" said Sir Stafford, as, on the day following the events we have just related, he slowly walked up and down his dressing-room.

"By the end of the week, if the weather only continue fine, we may be on the road again."

"I'm glad of it — heartily glad of it! Not that, as regarded myself, it mattered much where I was laid up in dock; but I find that this isolation, instead of drawing the members of my family more closely together, has but served to widen the breach between them. Lady Hester and Sydney rarely meet; George sees neither of them, and rarely comes near me, so that the sooner we go hence the better for all of us."

Grounsell gave a dry nod of assent, without speaking.

"Sydney is very anxious to go and pass some time with her aunt Conway; but I foresee, that if I consent, the difference between Lady Hester and her will then become an irreconcilable quarrel. You don't agree with me, Grounsell?"

"I do not. I never knew the ends of a fractured bone unite by grating them eternally against each other."

"And, as for George, the lounging habits of his service and cigars have steeped him in an indolence

from which there is no emerging. I scarcely know what to do with him."

"It's hard enough to decide upon," rejoined Grounsell; "he has some pursuits, but not one ambition."

"He has very fair abilities, certainly," said Sir Stafford, half peevishly.

"Very fair!" nodded Grounsell.

"A good memory — a quick apprehension."

"He has one immense deficiency, for which nothing can compensate," said the Doctor, solemnly.

"Application — industry?"

"No, with *his* opportunities a great deal is often acquired with comparatively light labour. I mean a greater and more important element."

"He wants steadiness, you think?"

"No; I'll tell you what he wants — he wants pluck!"

Sir Stafford's cheek became suddenly crimson, and his blue eyes grew almost black in the angry expression of the moment.

"Pluck, Sir? My son deficient in courage?"

"Not as you understand it now," resumed Grounsell, calmly. "He has enough, and more than enough, to shoot me or anybody else that would impugn it. The quality I mean is of a very different order. It is the daring to do a thing badly to-day in the certain confidence that you will do it better to-morrow, and succeed perfectly in it this day twelvemonth. He has not pluck to encounter repeated failures, and yet return every morning to the attack; he has not pluck to be bullied by mediocrity in the sure and certain confidence that he will live to surpass it; in a word, he has not that pluck which resists the dictation of in-

ferior minds, and inspires self-reliance through self-respect."

"I confess I cannot see that in the station he is like to occupy such qualities are at all essential," said Sir Stafford, almost haughtily.

"Twenty thousand a year is a fine thing, and may dispense with a great many gifts in its possessor; and a man like myself, who never owned a twentieth of the amount, may be a precious bad judge of the requisites to spend it suitably; but I'll tell you one thing, Onslow, that organ the phrenologists call "Combativeness" is the best in the whole skull."

"I think your Irish friend Dalton must have been imparting some of his native prejudices to you," said Onslow, smiling; "and, by the way, when have you seen him?"

"I went to call there last night, but I found a tea-party, and didn't go in. Only think of these people, with beggary staring them on every side, sending out for "Caravan" tea at I don't know how many florins a pound."

"I heard of it; but then, once and a-way — —"

"Once and a-way! Ay, but once is ruin."

"Well, I hope Prichard has arranged everything by this time. He has gone over this morning to complete the business; so that I trust, when we leave Baden, these worthy people will be in the enjoyment of easier circumstances."

"I see him crossing over the street now. I'll leave you together."

"No, no, Grounsell; wait and hear his report; we may want your advice besides, for I'm not quite clear that this large sum of arrears should be left at Dal-

ton's untrammelled disposal, as Mr. Prichard intended it should be a test of that excellent gentleman's prudence."

Mr. Prichard's knock was now heard at the door, and the next moment he entered. His pale countenance was slightly flushed, and in the expression of his face it might be read, that he had come from a scene of unusual excitement.

"I have failed, completely failed, Sir Stafford," said he, with a sigh, as he seated himself, and threw a heavy roll of paper on the table before him.

As Sir Stafford did not break the pause that followed these words, Prichard resumed.

"I told you last night that Mr. Dalton, not being able clearly to understand my communication, which I own, to prevent any searching scrutiny on his part, I did my best to envelop in a covering of technicalities, referred me to his eldest daughter, in whose acuteness he reposes much confidence. If I was not impressed with the difficulty of engaging such an adversary, from his description, still less was I on meeting with the young lady this morning. A very quietly-mannered, unassuming person, with considerable good looks, which once upon a time must have been actual beauty, was seated alone in the drawing-room awaiting me. Her dress was studiously plain; and were it not for an air of great neatness throughout, I should perhaps call it even poor. I mention all these matters with a certain prolixity, because they bear upon what ensued.

"Without waiting for me to open my communication, she began by a slight apology for her presence there, occasioned as she said by her father's

ill-health and consequent incapacity to transact business; after which she added a few words expressive of a hope that I would make my statement in the most simple and intelligible form, divested so far as might be of technical phraseology, and such as, to use her own words, a very unlettered person like herself might comprehend.

"This opening, I confess, somewhat startled me; I scarcely expected so much from her father's daughter; but I acquiesced and went on. As we concocted the whole plot together here, Sir Stafford, it is needless that I should weary you by a repetition of it. It is enough that I say, I omitted nothing of plausibility, either in proof of the bequest, or in the description of the feeling that prompted its fulfilment. I descanted upon the happy event which, in the course of what seemed an accident, had brought the two families together, and prefaced their business intercourse by a friendship. I adverted to the good influence increased comforts would exercise upon her father's health. I spoke of her sister and her brother in the fuller enjoyment of all that became their name and birth. She heard me to the very end with deep attention, never once interrupting, nor even by a look or gesture expressing dissent.

"At last, when I had concluded, she said, 'This, then, is a bequest?'

"I replied affirmatively."

"'In that case,' said she, 'the terms on which it is conveyed will solve all the difficulty of our position. If my uncle Godfrey intended this legacy to be a peace-offering, however late it has been in coming, we should have no hesitation in accepting it; if he

meant that his generosity should be trammelled by conditions, or subject in any way to the good pleasure of a third party, the matter will have a different aspect. Which is the truth?'

"I hesitated at this point-blank appeal, so different from what I looked for; and she at once asked to see the will. Disconcerted still more, I now prevaricated, stating that I had not brought the document with me; that a memorandum of its provisions would, I had supposed, prove sufficient; and finally assured her that acceptance of the bequest involved neither a condition nor a pledge.

"'It may, however, involve an obligation, Sir,' said she, firmly. 'Let us learn if such be the case.'

"Are you so proud, Miss Dalton," said I, "that you cannot even submit to an obligation?"

"She blushed deeply, and with a weak voice answered,

"'We are too poor to incur a debt.'

"Seeing it was useless to dwell longer on this part of the subject, I adverted to her father's increasing age, his breaking health, and the necessity of affording him a greater share of comforts, but she suddenly stopped me, saying,

"'You may make my refusal of this favour — for such it is, and nothing less — a more painful duty than I deemed it, but you cannot alter my resolution, Sir. Poverty, so long as it is honourable, has nothing mean nor undeserving about it, but dependence can never bestow happiness. It is true, as you say, that my dear father might have around him many of those little luxuries that he once was used to; but with what changed hearts would not his children minister

them to him? Where would be that high prompting sense of duty that every self-sacrifice is met by now? Where that rich reward of an approving spirit that lightens toil and makes even weariness blessed? Our humble fortunes have linked us closer together; the storms of the world have made us draw nearer to each other, have given us one heart, hope, and love alike. Leave us then to struggle on, nor cast the gloom of dependence over days that all the ills of poverty could not darken. We are happy now; who can tell what we should become hereafter?'

"I tried to turn her thoughts upon her brother, but she quickly stopped me, saying,

"'Frank is a soldier; the rewards in his career are never withheld from the deserving; at all events, wealth would be unsuitable to him. He never knew but narrow fortunes, and the spirit that becomes a more exalted condition is not the growth of a day.'

"I next ventured, but with every caution and delicacy, to inquire whether your aid and influence might not avail them in any future plans of life they might form?

"'We have no plans,' said she, simply; 'or rather, we have had so many, that they all resolve themselves into mere castle-building. My dear father longs for Ireland again — for home as he still calls it — forgetting that we have no longer a home there. He fancies warm-hearted friends and neighbours — an affectionate people, attached to the very traditions of his name; but it is now wiser to feed this delusion than destroy it, by telling him that few, scarcely one of his old companions still lives — that other influences, other fortunes, other names, have replaced ours; we

should go back there as strangers, and without even the stranger's claim to kind acceptance. Then, we had thought of the new world beyond seas; but these are the lands of the young, the ardent, and the enterprising, high in hope and resolute of heart; and so, at last, we deemed it wisest to seek out some quiet spot, in some quiet country, where our poverty would, at least, present nothing remarkable, and there to live for each other; and we are happy — so happy — that save the passing dread that this delicious calm of life may not be lasting, we have few sorrows.'

"Again and again I tried to persuade her to recal her decision, but in vain. Once only did she show any sign of hesitation. It was when I charged her with pride as the reason of refusal. Then suddenly her eyes filled up, and her lip trembled, and such a change came over her features, that I grew shocked at my own words.

"'Pride!' cried she. 'If you mean that inordinate self-esteem that prefers isolation to sympathy — that rejects an obligation from mere haughtiness, I know not the feeling. Our pride is not in our self-sufficiency — for every step in life teaches us how much we owe to others; but in this, that low in lot, and humble in means, we have kept, and hope still to keep, the motives and principles that guided us in happier fortunes. Yes, you may call us proud, for we are so; — proud that our poverty has not made us mean — proud that in a strange land we have inspired sentiments of kindness, and even of affection — proud that, without any of the gifts or graces which attract, we have drawn towards us this instance of

noble generosity of which you are now the messenger. I am not ashamed to own pride in all these.'

"To press her further was useless; and only asking, that if by any future change of circumstances she might be induced to alter her resolve, she would still consider the proposition as open to her acceptance, I took my leave."

"This is most provoking," exclaimed Onslow.

"Provoking!" cried Grounsell; "you call it provoking! That where you sought to confer a benefit you discover a spirit greater than all the favours wealth ever gave, or ever will give! A noble nature, that soars above every accident of fortune, provoking!"

"I spoke with reference to myself," replied Onslow, tartly; "and I repeat, it is most provoking that I am unable to make a recompense where I have unquestionably inflicted a wrong!"

"Rather thank God that in this age of money-seeking and gold-hunting, there lives one whose heart is uncorrupted and incorruptible," cried Grounsell.

"If I had not seen it I could not have believed it!" said Prichard.

"Of course not, Sir," chimed in Grounsell, bluntly. "Yours is not the trade where such instances are frequently met with; nor have I met with many myself!"

"I beg to observe," said Prichard, mildly, "that even in *my* career I have encountered many acts of high generosity."

"Generosity! Yes, I know what that means. A sister who surrenders her legacy to a spendthrift bro-

ther — a childless widow that denies herself the humblest means of comfort to help the ruined brother of her lost husband — a wife who places in a reckless husband's hand the last little remnant of fortune that was hoarded against the day of utter destitution; and they are always women who do these things — saving, scraping, careful creatures, full of self-denial and small economies. Not like your generous men, as the world call them, whose free-heartedness is nothing but selfishness — whose liberality is the bait to catch flattery. But it is not of generosity I speak here. To give, even to one's last farthing, is far easier than to refuse help when you are needy. To draw the rags of poverty closer, to make their folds drape decently, and hide the penury within, that is the victory, indeed."

"Mark you," cried Onslow, laughing; "it is an old bachelor says all this."

Grounsell's face became scarlet, and as suddenly pale as death; and, although he made an effort to speak, not a sound issued from his lips. For an instant the pause which ensued was unbroken, when a tap was heard at the door. It was a message from Lady Hester, requesting, if Sir Stafford were disengaged, to be permitted to speak with him.

"You 're not going, Grounsell?" cried Sir Stafford, as he saw the Doctor seize his hat; but he hastened out of the room without speaking. While the lawyer, gathering up his papers, prepared to follow him.

"We shall see you at dinner, Prichard?" said Sir Stafford. "I have some hope of joining the party myself to-day."

Mr. Prichard bowed his acknowledgments, and departed.

And now the old Baronet sat down to ponder in his mind the reasons for so strange an event as a visit in the forenoon from Lady Hester. "What can it mean? She can't want money," thought he; "'t is but the other day I sent her a large check. Is she desirous of going back to England again? Are there any new disagreements at work?" This last thought reminded him of those of whom he had been so lately hearing — of those whose narrow fortunes had drawn them nearer to each other, rendering them more tolerant and more attached, while in his own family, where affluence prevailed, he saw nothing but dissension.

As he sat pondering over this not too pleasant problem, a tall and serious looking footman entered the room, rolling before him an arm-chair. Another and not less dignified functionary followed, with cushions and a foot-warmer. Signs which Sir Stafford at once read as indicative of a long interview; for her Ladyship's preparations were always adopted with a degree of forethought and care, that she very rarely exhibited in matters of real consequence.

Sir Stafford was contemplating these august demonstrations, when the solemn voice of an upper servant announced Lady Hester, and, after a second's pause, she swept into the room in all that gauzy amplitude of costume, that gives to the wearer a seeming necessity of inhabiting the most spacious apartments of a palace.

"How d' ye do?" said she, languidly, as she sank down into her chair. "I had not the least notion how

far this room was off! If Clements has not been taking me a tour of the whole house!"

Mr. Clements, who was still busily engaged in disposing and arranging the cushions, blandly assured her Ladyship that they had come by the most direct way.

"I'm sorry for it," said she, peevishly, "for I shall have the more fatigue in going back again. There, you're only making it worse. You never can learn that I don't want to be propped up like an invalid. That will do; you may leave the room. Sir Stafford, would you be good enough to draw that blind a little lower, the sun is directly in my eyes. Dear me, how yellow you are! or is it the light in this horrid room? Am I so dreadfully bilious-looking?"

"On the contrary," said he, smiling, "I should pronounce you in the most perfect enjoyment of health."

"Oh, of course, I have no doubt of that. I only wonder you didn't call it 'rude health.' I cannot conceive anything more thoroughly provoking than the habit of estimating one's sufferings by the very efforts made to suppress them."

"Sufferings, my dear; I really was not aware that you had sufferings."

"I am quite sure of that; nor is it my habit to inflict others with complaint. I'm sure your friend, Mr. Grounsell, would be equally unable to acknowledge their existence. How I do hate that man! and I know, Stafford, he hates us. Oh, you smile as if to say, 'Only some of us;' but I tell you he detests us all, and his old school-fellow — as he vulgarly persists in calling you — as much as the others."

"I sincerely hope you are mistaken —"

"Polite, certainly; you trust that his dislike is limited to myself. Not that for my own part I have the least objection to any amount of detestation with which he may honour me; it is the tribute the low and obscure invariably render the well-born, and I am quite ready to accept it; but I own it is a little hard that I must submit to the infliction beneath my own roof."

"My dear Hester, how often have I assured you that you were mistaken; and that what you regard as disrespect to yourself is the roughness of an unpolished, but sterling, nature. The ties which have grown up between him and me since we were boys together ought not to be snapped for sake of a mere misunderstanding; and if you cannot or will not estimate him for the good qualities he unquestionably possesses, at least bear with him for my sake."

"So I should — so I strive to do; but the evil does not end there; he inspires everybody with the same habits of disrespect and indifference. Did you remark Clements, a few moments since, when I spoke to him about that cushion?"

"No, I can't say that I did."

"Why should you; nobody ever does trouble their head about anything that relates to my happiness! Well, I remarked it, and saw the supercilious smile he assumed when I told him that the pillow was wrong. He looked over at *you*, too, as though to say, 'You see how impossible it is to please her.'"

"I certainly saw nothing of that."

"Even Prichard, that formerly was the most diffident of men, is now so much at his ease, so very

much at home in my presence. It is quite amusing. It was but yesterday he asked me to take wine with him at dinner. The anachronism was bad enough, but only fancy the liberty!"

"And what did you do?" asked Sir Stafford, with difficulty repressing a smile.

"I affected not to hear, hoping he would not expose himself before the servants by a repetition of the request. But he went on, 'Will your Ladyship' — I assure you he said that — 'will your Ladyship do me the honour to drink wine with me?' I merely stared at him, but never took any notice of his speech. Would you believe it! he returned to the charge again, and with his hand on his wine-glass began, 'I have taken the liberty —' I couldn't hear more, so I turned to George, and said, 'George, will you tell that man not to do *that*.'"

Sir Stafford could not restrain himself any longer, but broke out into a burst of hearty laughter. "Poor Prichard," said he, at last, "I almost think I see him before me!"

"You never think of saying, 'Poor Hester, these are not the associates you have been accustomed to live with!' But I could be indifferent to all these, if my own family treated me with proper deference. As for Sydney and George, however, they have actually coventried me; and although I anticipated many sacrifices when I married, this I certainly never speculated upon. Lady Wallingcroft, indeed, warned me to a certain extent of what I should meet with; but I fondly hoped that disparity of years and certain differences, the fruits of early prejudices and habits, would be the

only drawbacks on my happiness; but I have lived to see my error!"

"The event has, indeed, not fulfilled what was expected from it," said Sir Stafford, with a slow and deliberate emphasis on each word.

"Oh! I comprehend you, perfectly," said she, colouring slightly, and for the first time displaying any trait of animation in her features. "You have been as much disappointed as I have! Just what my aunt Wallingcroft prophesied. 'Remember,' said she — and I 'm sure I have had good cause to remember it — 'their ideas are not our ideas; they have not the same hopes, ambitions, or objects, that we have; their very morality is not our morality!'"

"Of what people or nation was her Ladyship speaking," asked Sir Stafford, mildly.

"Of the City, generally," replied Lady Hester, proudly.

"Not in ignorance either," rejoined Sir Stafford; "her own father was a merchant in Lombard-street."

"But the family are of the best blood in Lancashire, Sir Stafford."

"It may be so; but I remember Walter Crofts himself boasting that he had danced to warm his feet on the very steps of the door in Grosvenorsquare, which afterwards acknowledged him as the master: and as he owed his wealth and station to honest industry and successful enterprise, none heard the speech without thinking the better of him."

"The anecdote is new to me," said Lady Hester, superciliously; "and I have little doubt that the worthy man was merely embellishing an incident to suit the tastes of his company."

"It was the company around his table, as Lord Mayor of London!"

"I could have sworn it!" said she, laughing; "but what has all this to do with what I wished to speak about — if I could but remember what it was! These eternal digressions have made me forget everything."

Although the appeal was palpably directed to Sir Stafford he sat silent and motionless, patiently awaiting the moment when recollection might enable her to resume.

"Dear me! how tiresome it is. I cannot think of what I came about, and you will not assist me in the least."

"Up to this moment you have given me no clue to it," said Sir Stafford, with a smile. "It was not to speak of Grounsell?"

"Of course not. I hate even to think of him!"

"Of Prichard, perhaps?" asked he, with a half-sly twinkle of the eye.

"Just as little!"

"Possibly your friend Colonel Haggerstone was in your thoughts?"

"Pray, do not call him my friend. I know very little of the gentleman; I intend even to know less. I declined to receive him this morning, when he sent up his card."

"An attention I fear he has not shown that poor creature he wounded, Grounsell tells me."

"Oh, I have it!" said she, suddenly; the allusion to Hans at once recalling the Daltons, and bringing to mind the circumstances she desired to remember. "It was exactly of these poor people I came to speak. You must know, Sir Stafford, that I have made the

acquaintance of a most interesting family, here — a father and two daughters — named Dalton —"

"Grounsell has already told me so," interrupted Sir Stafford.

"Of course, then, every step I have taken in this intimacy has been represented in the most odious light. The amiable Doctor will have, doubtless, imputed to me the least worthy motives for knowing persons in their station?"

"On the contrary, Hester. If he expressed any qualification to the circumstance, it was in the form of a fear, lest the charms of your society, and the graces of your manner, might indispose them to return with patience to the dull round of their daily privations."

"Indeed!" said she, superciliously. "A weak dose of his own acquaintance would be, then, the best antidote he could advise them! But, really, I must not speak of this man; any allusion to him is certain to jar my nerves, and irritate my feelings for the whole day after. I want to interest you about these Daltons."

"Nothing more easy, my dear, since I already know something about them."

"The Doctor being your informant," said she, snappishly.

"No, no, Hester; many, many years ago, certain relations existed between us, and I grieve to say that Mr. Dalton has reason to regard me in no favourable light; and it was but the very moment I received your message, I was learning from Prichard the failure of an effort I had made to repair a wrong. I will not weary you with a long and a sad story, but briefly

mention that Mr. Dalton's late wife was a distant relative of my own.

"Yes, yes; I see it all." There was a little love in the business — an old flame revived in after-life — nothing serious, of course — but jealousies and misconstructions — to any extent. Dear me, and that was the reason she died of a broken heart!" It was hard to say if Sir Stafford was more amused at the absurdity of this imputation, or stung by the cool indifference with which she uttered it; nor was it easy to know how the struggle within him would terminate, when she went on. "It does appear so silly to see a pair of elderly gentlemen raking up a difference out of an '*amourette*' of the past century. You are very fortunate to have so quiet a spot to exhibit in!"

"I am sorry to destroy an illusion so very full of amusement, Lady Hester; but I owe it to all parties to say, that your pleasant fancy has not even the shadow of a colour. I never even saw Mrs. Dalton — never have yet met her husband. The event to which I was about to allude, when you interrupted me, related to a bequest —"

"Oh! I know the whole business, now! It was at your suit that dreadful mortgage was foreclosed, and these dear people were driven away from their ancient seat of Mount Dalton. I'm sure I've heard the story at least ten times over, but never suspected that your name was mixed up with it. I do assure you, Sir Stafford, that they have never dropped the most distant hint of you in connexion with that sad episode."

"They have been but just, Lady Hester," said he, gravely. "I never did hold a mortgage over this pro-

perty, still less exercised the severe right you speak of. But it is quite needless to pursue a narrative that taxes your patience so severely; enough to say, that through Prichard's mediation, I have endeavoured to persuade Mr. Dalton that I was the trustee, under a will, of a small annuity on his life. He has peremptorily refused to accept it, although, as I am informed, living in circumstances of great poverty."

"Poor they must be, certainly. The house is wretchedly furnished, and the girls wear such clothes as I never saw before; not that they are even the worn and faded finery of better days, but actually the coarse stuffs such as the peasants wear!"

"So I have heard."

"Not even an edging of cheap lace round their collars; not a bow of ribbon; not an ornament of the humblest kind about them."

"And both handsome, I am told?"

"The younger, beautiful! — the deepest blue eyes in the world, with long fringed lashes, and the most perfect mouth you can imagine. The elder very pretty too, but sad looking, for she has a fearful lameness, poor thing. They say it came from a fall off a horse, but I suspect it must have begun in infancy; one of those dreadful things they call 'spine.' Like all persons in her condition, she is monstrously clever: carves the most beautiful little groups in boxwood, and models in clay and plaister. She is a dear, mild, gentle thing, but I suspect, with all that infirmity of temper, that comes of long illness, at least, she is seldom in high spirits like her sister. Kate, the younger girl, is my favourite; a fine, generous, warm-

hearted creature, full of life and animation, and so fond of *me* already."

If Sir Stafford did not smile at the undue emphasis laid upon the last few words, it was not that he had not read their full significance.

"And Mr. Dalton himself — what is *he* like?"

"Like nothing I ever met before: the oddest mixture of right sentiments and wrong inferences — of benevolence, cruelty, roughness, gentleness; the most refined consideration, and the most utter disregard for other people and their feelings — that ever existed. You never can guess what will be his sentiments at any moment, or on any subject, except on the question of family, when his pride almost savours of insanity. I believe, in his own country, he would be nothing strange nor singular, but out of it he is a figure unsuited to any landscape."

"It is hard to say how much of this peculiarity may have come of adverse fortune," said Sir Stafford, thoughtfully.

"I 'm certain he was always the same; at least, it would be impossible to imagine him anything different. But I have not come to speak of him, but of his daughter Kate, in whom I am deeply interested. You must know, Sir Stafford, that I have formed a little plan, for which I want your aid and concurrence. It is to take this dear girl along with us to Italy."

"Take her to Italy? In what position, Lady Hester? You surely never intended any menial station?"

"Of course not: a kind of humble friend — what they call a 'companion' in the newspapers; to have always with one. She is exactly the creature to dis-

sipate low spirits and banish *ennui*, and, with the advantages of training and teaching, will become a most attractive girl. As it is, she has not been quite neglected. Her French accent is very pure; German, I conclude, she talks fluently; she plays prettily — at least, as well as one can judge on that vile tinkling old harpsichord, whose legs dance every time it is touched; and sings very pleasingly those little German ballads that are now getting into fashion. In fact, it is the tone of society — that mannerism of the world — she is deficient in more than anything else."

"She certainly could not study in a better school than yours, Lady Hester; but I see some very great objections to the whole scheme, and without alluding to such as relate to ourselves, but simply those that regard the young lady herself. Would it be a kindness to withdraw her from the sphere wherein she is happy and contented, to mingle for a season or so in another and very different rank? contracting new habits of thought, new ideas, new associations — learning each day to look down upon that humble lot to which she must eventually return."

"She need not return to it. She is certain to marry, and marry well. A girl with so many attractions as she will possess, may aspire to a very high match indeed!"

"This is too hazardous a game of life to please my fancy," said Sir Stafford, dubiously. "We ought to look every contingency in the face in such a matter as this."

"I have given the subject the very deepest consideration," replied Lady Hester, authoritatively. "I have turned the question over and over in my mind,

and have not seen a single difficulty for which there is not an easy remedy."

"Sydney certainly ought to be consulted."

"I have done so already. She is charmed with the project. She sees, perhaps, how few companionable qualities she herself possesses, and anticipates that Miss Dalton will supply that place towards me that she is too indolent and too indifferent to fill."

"How would the family receive such a proposition; they seem to be very proud. Is it likely that they would listen to a project of this nature?"

"There lies the only difficulty; nor need it be an insuperable one, if we manage cleverly. The affair will require delicate treatment, because, if we merely invite her to accompany us, they will naturally enough decline an invitation, to comply with which would involve a costly outlay in dress and ornament, quite impossible in their circumstances. This must be a matter of diplomacy, of which the first step is, however, already taken."

"The first step! How do you mean?"

"Simply, that I have already, but in the deepest confidence, hinted the possibility of the project to Kate Dalton, and she is wild with delight at the bare thought of it. The dear child! with what rapture she heard me speak of the balls, and fêtes, and theatres, of the great world! — of the thousand fascinations society has in store for all who have a rightful claim to its homage, the tribute rendered to beauty, greater than that conceded to rank or genius itself! I told her of all these, and I showed her my diamonds!"

Sir Stafford made, involuntarily, a slight gesture with his hand, as though to say, "This last was the *coup-de-grace.*"

"So far, then, as Kate is concerned, she will be a willing ally; nor do I anticipate any opposition from her quiet, submissive sister, who seems to doat upon her. The Papa, indeed, is like to prove refractory; but this must be our business to overcome."

Lady Hester, who at the opening of the interview had spoken with all the listlessness of *ennui*, had gradually worked herself up to a species of ardour, that made her words flow rapidly: a sign well known to Sir Stafford, that her mind was bent upon an object that would not admit of gainsay. Some experience had taught him the impolicy of absolute resistance, and trained him to a tactic of waiting and watching for eventualities; which, whether the campaign be civil, military, or conjugal, is not without a certain degree of merit. In the present case there were several escape-valves. The Daltons were three in number, and should be unanimous. All the difficulties of the plan should be arranged, not alone to their perfect satisfaction, but without a wound to their delicacy. Grounsell was certain to be a determined opponent to the measure, and would of course be consulted upon it. And, lastly, if everything worked well and favourably, Lady Hester herself was by no means certain, to wish for it, the day after she had conquered all opposition.

These, and many similar reasons, showed Sir Stafford that he might safely concede a concurrence that need never become practical, and, making a merit of his necessity, he affected to yield to arguments that had no value in his eyes.

"How do you propose to open the campaign, Hester?" asked he, after a pause.

"I have arranged it all," said she, with animation. "We must visit the Daltons together — or, better still — you shall go alone. No, no; a letter will be the right thing, a very carefully-written letter, that shall refute by anticipation every possible objection to the plan, and show the Daltons the enormous advantages they must derive from it."

"As, for instance?" said Sir Stafford, with apparent anxiety to be instructed.

"Enormous they certainly will be!" exclaimed she; "first of all, Kate, as I have said, is certain to marry well, and will be thus in a position to benefit the others, who, poor things, can do nothing for themselves."

"Very true, my dear; very true. You see all these things far more rapidly, and more clearly, than I do."

"I have thought so long and so much about it, I suppose there are few contingencies of the case have escaped me; and now that I learn how you once knew and were attached to the poor girl's mother —"

"I am sorry to rob you of so harmless an illusion," interrupted he, smiling; "but I have already said, I never saw her."

"Oh, you did say so! I forget all about it. Well, there was something or other that brought the families in relation, no matter what; and it must be a great satisfaction to you to see the breach restored, and through my intervention, too, for I must needs say, Sir Stafford, there are many women who would entertain a silly jealousy respecting one who once occupied the first place in their husband's esteem."

"Must I once more assure you that this whole assumption is groundless; that I never —"

"Quite enough — more than I ask for — more than I have any right to ask for," broke she in. "If you did not interrupt me — and pardon me if I say that this habit of yours is calculated to produce innumerable misconceptions — I say, that if I had not been interrupted, I would have told you that I regard such jealousies as most mean and unworthy. We cannot be the arbiters of our affections any more than of our fortunes; and if in early life we may have formed attachments, imprudent attachments," — here her Ladyship, who had unwittingly glided from the consideration of Sir Stafford's case to that of her own, became confused and flurried, her check flushing and her chest heaving; she looked overwhelmed with embarrassment, and it was only after a long struggle to regain the lost clue to her discourse she could falteringly say, "Don't you agree with me? I 'm sure you agree with me."

"I 'm certain I should, if I only understood you aright," said he, good-naturedly, and by his voice and look at once reassuring her.

"Well, so far, all is settled," said she, rising from her chair; "and now for this letter; I conclude, the sooner it be done the better. When may we hope to get away from this dreary place?"

"Grounsell tells me, by Friday or Saturday next I shall be able for the journey."

"If it had not been to provoke me, I 'm certain he would have pronounced you quite well ten days ago."

"You forget, Hester, my own sensations — not to say sufferings — could scarcely deceive me."

"On the contrary, Doctor Clarus assured me there

is nothing in the world so very deceptive; that pain is only referred to the diseased part by the brain, and has no existence whatever, and that there is no such thing as pain at all. He explained it perfectly; and I understood it all at the time. He is *so* clever, Doctor Clarus, and gives one such insight into the nature of their malady, that it really becomes quite interesting to be ill under his care. I remember when William, the footman, broke his arm, Clarus used to see him every day; and to show that no union, as it is called, could take place so long as motion continued, he would gently grate the fractured ends of the bone together."

"And was William convinced of the no-pain doctrine?" cried Sir Stafford, his cheek flashing with momentary anger.

"The ignorant creature actually screamed out every time he was touched; but Clarus said it would take at least two centuries to conquer the prejudices of the common people."

"Not improbable either!" said Sir Stafford.

"Dear me, how very late it is," cried she, suddenly; "and we dine at six!" And with a graceful motion of the hand she said, "Bye! bye!" and left the room.

CHAPTER XVI.

The "Saal" of "The Russie."

Has the observant reader ever remarked a couple of persons parading the deck of a ship at sea — walking step for step through half a day, turning with the same short jerk, to resume the same short path, and yet never interchanging a word; the rhythm of the foot-fall the only tie of companionship between them. They halt occasionally, too, to look over the bulwarks, at some white sail far away, or some cloud-bank rising from the horizon; mayhap they linger to watch the rolling porpoises as they pass, or the swift nautilus, as he glides along; but yet never a sound nor token of mutual intelligence escapes them. It is enough that they live surrounded by the same influences, breathe the same air, and step in the same time; they have their separate thoughts, wide, perhaps, as the poles asunder, and yet by some strange magnetism they feel there is a kind of sociality in their speechless intercourse.

From some such cause, perhaps, it was that Colonel Haggerstone and Jekyl took their accustomed walk in the dreary dining-room of the "Hotel de Russie." The evening was cold and cheerless, as on that when first we met them there — a drifting rain, mingled with sleet, beat against the windows, and the wind, in mournful cadences, sighed along the dreary and deserted corridors. It was a comfortless scene

within doors and without. A chance glance through the window — an occasional halt, to listen when the thunder rolled louder and nearer, showed that, to a certain extent, the same emotions were common to each; but nothing else betrayed any community of sentiment between them, as they paced the room from end to end.

"English people come abroad for climate!" said Haggerstone, as he buttoned his collar tightly around his neck, and pressed his hat more firmly on his head. "But who ever saw the like of this in England?"

"In England you have weather, but no climate!" said Jekyl, with one of his little smiles of self-approval, for he caressed himself when he uttered a "mot," and seemed to feel no slight access of self-satisfaction.

"It's not the worst thing we have there, Sir, I promise you," rejoined Haggerstone, authoritatively.

"Our coughs and rheumatics are, indeed, sore drawbacks upon patriotism."

"I do not speak of *them*, Sir; I allude to our insolent, overbearing aristocracy, who, sprung from the people as they are, recruited from the ranks of trade or law, look down upon the really ancient blood of the land — the untitled nobility. Who are they, Sir, that treat us thus? The fortunate speculator, who has amassed a million; the Attorney-General, who has risen to a Chief-Justiceship; men without ancestry, without landed influence; a lucky Banker, perhaps, like our friend up-stairs, may stand in the *Gazette* to-morrow or next day, as Baron or Viscount, without one single requirement of the station, save his money."

"I confess, if I have a weakness, it is for Lords," said Jekyl, simperingly. "I suppose I must have caught it very early in life, for it clings to me like an instinct."

"I feel happy to avow that I have none, Sir. Six centuries of gentry blood suffice for all my ambitions; but I boil over when I see the overweening presumption of these new people."

"After all, new people, like a new watch, a new coat, and a new carriage, have the best chance of lasting. Old and worn out are very nearly convertible terms."

"These are sentiments, Sir, which would, doubtless, do you excellent service with the family up-stairs, but are quite thrown away upon such a mere country gentleman as myself."

Jekyl smiled, and drew up his cravat, with his habitual simpering air, but said nothing.

"Do you purpose remaining much longer here?" asked Haggerstone, abruptly.

"A few days, at most."

"Do you turn north or south?"

"I fancy I shall winter in Italy."

"The Onslows, I believe, are bound for Rome?"

"Can't say," was the short reply.

"Just the sort of people for Italy. The fashionables, of what the Chinese call 'second chop,' go down admirably at Rome or Naples."

"Very pleasant places they are, too," said Jekyl, with a smile. "The climate permits everything — even dubious intimacies."

Haggerstone gave a short "Ha!" at the heresy of this speech, but made no other comment on it.

"They say that Miss Onslow will have about a hundred thousand pounds?" said Haggerstone, with an air of inquiry.

"What a deal of maccaroni and parmesan that sum would buy!"

"Would you have her marry an Italian, Sir?"

"Perhaps not, if she were to consult me on the matter," said Jekyl, blandly; "but as this is, to say the least, not very probable, I may own that I like the mixed marriages well enough."

"They make miserable 'ménages,' Sir," broke in Haggerstone.

"But excessively agreeable houses to visit at."

"The Onslows are scarcely the people to succeed in that way," rejoined Haggerstone, whose thoughts seemed to revolve round this family without any power to wander from the theme. "Mere money, nothing but money to guide them."

"Not a bad pilot either, as times go."

Haggerstone uttered another short "Ha!" as though to enter a protest against the sentiment without the trouble of a refutation. He had utterly failed in all his efforts to draw Jekyl into a discussion of the Banker's family, or even obtain from that excessively cautious young gentleman the slightest approach to an opinion about them; and yet it was exactly in search of this opinion that he had come down to take his walk that evening. It was in the hope that Jekyl might afford him some clue to these people's thoughts, or habits, or their intentions for the coming winter, that he had promenaded for the last hour and a half. "If he knew anything of them," thought Haggerstone,

"he will be but too proud to show it, and display the intimacy to its fullest extent!"

It was, then, to his utter discomfiture he learned that Jekyl had scarcely spoken to Lady Hester, and never even seen Sir Stafford or Miss Onslow. It was, then, pure invention of the waiter to say that they were acquainted. "Jekyl has done nothing," muttered he to himself, "and I suppose I need not throw away a dinner upon him to tell it."

Such were his reasonings; and long did he balance in his own mind whether it were worth while to risk a bottle of Burgundy in such a cause; for often does it happen that the fluid thrown down the pump is utterly wasted, and that it is vain to moisten the sucker, if the well beneath be exhausted!

To be, or not to be, was then the eventful point he deliberated with himself. Haggerstone never threw away a dinner in his life. He was not one of those vulgarly-minded folk who ask you, in a parenthesis, to come in to "manger la soupe," as they say, without more preparation than the spreading of your napkin. No; he knew all the importance of a dinner, and, be it acknowledged, how to give it also, and could have distinguished perfectly between the fare to set before a "habitual dinner out," and that suitable to some newly arrived Englishman abroad: he could have measured his guest to a truffle! It was his boast that he never gave a pheasant when a poulet would have sufficed, nor wasted his "Chablis" on the man who would have been contented with "Barsac."

The difficulty was not, then, how to have treated Jekyl, but whether to treat him at all. Indeed, the little dinner itself had been all planned and arranged

that morning; and the "trout" from the "Moorg," and the grouse from Eberstein, had been "pricked off," in the bill of fare, for "No. 24," as he was unceremoniously designated, with a special order about the dish of whole truffles with butter, in the fair intention of inviting Mr. Albert Jekyl to partake of them.

If a lady reveals some latent desire of conquest in the coquetry of her costume and the more than ordinary care of her appearance, so your male friend may be suspected of a design upon your confidence or your liberality by the studious propriety of his *petit dîner*. Never fall into the vulgar error that such things are mere accident. As well ascribe to chance the rotations of the seasons, or the motions of the heavenly bodies! Your *printanière* in January — your *épigramme d'agneau* with asparagus, at Christmas, show a solicitude to please to the full as ardent, and not a whit less sincere, than the soft glances that have just set your heart a-beating from the recesses of yonder opera-box.

"Will you eat your cutlet with me to-day, Mr. Jekyl?" said Haggerstone, after a pause, in which he had weighed long and well all the pros and cons of the invitation.

"Thanks, but I dine with the Onslows!" lisped out Jekyl, with a languid indifference, that however did not prevent his remarking the almost incredulous amazement in the Colonel's face; "and I perceive," added he, "that it's time to dress."

Haggerstone looked after him as he left the room; and then ringing the bell violently, gave orders to his servant to "pack up," for he would leave Baden next morning.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Family Discussion.

Something more than a week after the scenes we have last related had occurred, the Daltons were seated around the fire, beside which, in the place of honour, in an old arm-chair, propped by many a cushion, reclined Hans Roëckle. A small lamp of three burners — such as the peasants use — stood upon the table, of which only one was lighted, and threw its fitful gleam over the board, covered by the materials of a most humble meal. Even this was untasted; and it was easy to mark in the downcast and depressed countenances of the group, that some deep care was weighing upon them.

Dalton himself, with folded arms, sat straight opposite the fire, his heavy brows closely knit, and his eyes staring fixedly at the blaze, as if expecting some revelation of the future from it; an open letter, which seemed to have dropped from his hand, was lying at his feet. Nelly, with bent-down head, was occupied in arranging the little tools and implements she was accustomed to use in carving; but in the tremulous motion of her fingers, and the short, quick heaving of her chest, might be read the signs of a struggle that cost heavily to subdue.

Half-concealed beneath the projection of the fireplace sat Kate Dalton — she was sewing; although to all seeming intent upon her work, more than once did

her fingers drop the needle to wipe the gushing tears from her eyes, while at intervals a short sob would burst forth, and break the stillness around.

As for Hans, he seemed lost in a dreamy reverie, from which he rallied at times to smile pleasantly at a little wooden figure — the same which occasioned his disaster — placed beside him.

There was an air of sadness over everything; and even the old spaniel, Joan, as she retreated from the heat of the fire, crept with stealthy step beneath the table, as if respecting the mournful stillness of the scene. How different the picture from what that humble chamber had so often presented! What a contrast to those happy evenings, when, as the girls worked, Hans would read aloud some of those strange mysteries of Jean Paul, or the wild and fanciful imaginings of Chamisso, while old Dalton would lay down his pipe and break in upon his memories of Ireland, to ask at what they were laughing, and Frank look up distractedly from his old chronicles of German war to join in the mirth! How, at such moments, Hans would listen to the interpretation, and with what greedy ears follow the versions the girls would give of some favourite passage, as if dreading lest its force should be weakened or its beauty marred by transmission. And then those outbreaks of admiration that would simultaneously gush forth at some sentiment of high and glorious meaning — some godlike gleam of bright intelligence, which, though clothed in the language of a foreign land, spoke home to their hearts with the force that truth alone can speak!

Yes, they were, indeed, happy evenings! when around their humble hearth came thronging the groups

of many a poet's fancy — bright pictures of many a glorious scene — emotions of hearts that seemed to beat in unison with their own. They felt no longer the poverty of their humble condition — they had no memory for the little straits and trials of the by-gone day, as they trod with Tieck the alley beneath the lindens of some rural village, or sat with Auerbach beneath the porch of the Vorsteher's dwelling. The dull realities of life faded before the vivid conceptions of fiction, and they imbibed lessons of patient submission and trustfulness from those brothers and sisters, who are poets' children.

And yet — what no darkness of adversity could rob them of — the first gleam of what — to worldly minds at least — would seem better fortune, had already despoiled them. Like the traveller in the fable — who had grasped his cloak the faster through the storm, but who threw it away when the hot rays scorched him — they could brave the hurricane, but not face the sunshine.

The little wooden clock behind the door struck nine, and Dalton started up suddenly —

"What did it strike, girls?" asked he, quickly.

"Nine, Papa," replied Kate, in a low voice.

"At what hour was he to come for the answer?"

"At ten," said she, still lower.

"Well, you 'd better write it at once," said he, with a peevishness very different from his ordinary manner; "they 've remained here already four days — isn't it four days she says — to give us time to make up our minds; we cannot detain them any longer."

"Lady Hester has shown every consideration for

our difficulty," said Kate. "We cannot be too grateful for her kindness."

"Tell her so," said he, bitterly. "I suppose women know when to believe each other?"

"And what reply am I to make, Sir?" said she, calmly, as, having put aside her work, she took her place at the writing-table.

"Faith, I don't care," said he, doggedly. "Nor is it much matter what opinion I give. I am nobody now; I have no right to decide upon anything."

"The right and duty are both yours, Papa."

"Duty! So I'm to be taught my duty as well as the rest!" said he, passionately. "Don't you think there are some others might remember that they have duties also?"

"Would that I could fulfil mine as my heart dictates them," said Ellen; and her lip trembled as she spoke the words.

"Faith! I scarce know what's my duty, with all the drilling and dictating I get," muttered he, sulkily. "But this I know; there's no will left me. I dare not budge this side or that, without leave."

"Dearest Papa, be just to yourself, if not me."

"Isn't it truth I'm saying?" continued he, his anger rising with every word he spoke. "One day I'm forbid to ask my friends home with me to dinner. Another, I'm told I oughtn't to go dine with *them*. I'm tutored and lectured at every hand's turn. Never a thought crosses me, but it's sure to be wrong. You din into my ears, how happy it is to be poor when one's contented."

"The lesson was yours, dear Papa," said Nelly, smiling. "Don't disavow your own teaching."

"Well, the more fool me. I know better now. But what 's the use of it? When the prospect of a little ease and comfort was offered to me, you persuaded me to refuse it. Ay, that you did! You began with the old story about our happy hearth and contentment; and where is it now?"

A sob, so low as to be scarcely heard, broke from Nelly, and she pressed her hand to her heart with a convulsive force.

"Can you deny it? You made me reject the only piece of kindness ever was shown me in a life long. There was the opportunity of spending the rest of my days in peace, and you wouldn't let me take it. And the fool I was to listen to you!"

"Oh, Papa, how you wrong her!" cried Kate, as, in a torrent of tears, she bent over his chair. Dearest Nelly has no thought but for us. Her whole heart is our own."

"If you could but see it!" cried Nelly, with a thick utterance.

"'T is a droll way of showing affection, then," said Dalton, "to keep *me* a beggar, and *you* no better than a servant-maid. It 's little matter about *me*, I know. I 'm old, and worn out — a reduced Irish gentleman, with nothing but his good blood remaining to him. But *you*, Kate, that are young and handsome — ay, faith! a deal sight better looking than my Lady herself — it 's a little hard that you are to be denied what might be your whole fortune in life."

"You surely would not stake all her happiness on the venture, Papa?" said Nelly, mildly.

"Happiness!" said he, scornfully; "what do you call happiness? Is it dragging out life in poverty,

like this, with the proudest friend in our list an old toy-maker?"

"Poor Hanserl!" murmured Nelly, in a low voice; but, soft as were the accents, the Dwarf heard them, and nodded his head twice, as though to thank her for a recognition, of whose import he knew nothing.

"Just so! You have pity enough for strangers, but none for your own people," said Dalton, as he arose and paced the room, the very act of motion serving to increase his anger. "He was never used to better; he's just what he always was. But think of *me!* think of the expectations I was reared to, the place I used to hold, and see me now!"

"Dearest, best Papa, do not say those bitter words," cried Kate, passionately. "Our own dear Nelly loves us truly. What has her life been but self-denial?"

"And have I not had my share of self-denial?" said he, abruptly. "Is there left a single one of the comforts I was always accustomed to? 'T is sick I am of hearing about submission, and patience, and resignation, and the like, and that we never were so happy as now. Faith! I tell you, I 'd rather have one day at Mount Dalton, as it used to be long ago, than I 'd have twenty years of the life I spend here."

"No, Papa, no," said Nelly, winding her arm around his waist; "you 'd rather sit at the window yonder, and listen to a song from Kate — one of your own favourites — or take a stroll with us after sunset of a summer's evening, and talk of Frank, than go back to all the gaiety of that wild life you speak of."

"Who says so?" asked he, roughly.

"You, yourself. Nay, don't deny it," said she, smiling.

"If I did, I was wrong, then," rejoined he, pushing her rudely away. "It was because I believed my children were affectionate and fond, and that whatever I set my heart on they'd be sure to wish just as much as myself."

"And when has that time ceased to be?" said she, calmly.

"What! — when has it ceased to be?" said he, sharply. "Is it you that asks that question — you that made me refuse the legacy?"

"Nay, Papa, be just," interrupted she, mildly. "The merit of that refusal was all your own. I did but explain to you the circumstances under which this gift, it was no less, was offered, and your own right feeling dictated the reply."

Dalton was silent. A struggling sense of pride in his imputed dignity of behaviour warring with the desire of fault-finding.

"Maybe, I did!" said he, at last, self-esteem gaining the mastery. "Maybe, I saw my own reasons for what I was going to do. A Dalton is not the man to mistake what's due to his name and family; but this is a different case. Here's an invitation, as elegant a piece of politeness as I have seen, from one our own equal in every respect; she calls herself a connexion too — we won't say much about that, for we never reckoned the English relations anything — asking my daughter to join them in their visit to Italy. When are we to see the like of that again? Is it every day that some rich family will make us the same offer? It's not to cost us a sixpence; read the letter, and

you 'll see how nicely it 's hinted, that her Ladyship takes everything upon herself. Well, if any one objected it might be myself; 't is on me will fall the heaviest part of the blow. It was only the other day Frank left me; now I 'm to lose Kate; not but I know very well Nelly will do her best."

Slight as was the praise, she kissed his hand passionately for it; and it was some seconds ere he could proceed.

"Yes, I 'm sure you 'll do all you can; but what is it after all? Won't I miss the songs she sings for me? — won't I miss her laughing voice and her sprightly step?"

"And why should you encounter such privations, Papa?" broke Nelly in. "These are, as you justly say, the greatest sources of your happiness. Why separate from them? Why rob this humble chamber of its fairest ornament? Why darken our hearth by an absence for which nothing can requite us?"

"I 'll tell you why, then," said he, and a sparkling gleam of cunning lit up his eye, as the casuistry crossed his mind. "Just because I can deny myself anything for my children's sake. 'T is for them I am thinking always. Give old Peter Dalton his due, and nobody can call him selfish; not the worst enemy ever he had! Let me feel that my children are benefited, and you may leave me to trudge along the weary path before me."

"Then, there only remains to see if this promise of benefit be real," said Nelly.

"And why wouldn't it? Doesn't everybody know that travelling and seeing foreign parts is equal to any education. How many things hav'n't I seen myself

since I came abroad, that I never dreamed about before I left home! Look at the way they dress the peas — with sugar in them. See how they shoe a horse — with a leg tied up to a post, as if they were going to cut it off. Mind the droll fashion they have of fastening a piece of timber to the hind wheel of a coach, by way of a drag! There's no end to their contrivances."

"Let us forget every consideration but one," said Nelly, earnestly. "What are the dangers that may beset Kate, in a career of such difficulty, when, without an adviser, miles away from us all, she may need counsel or comfort. Think of her in sickness or in sorrow, or, worse than both, under temptation. Picture to yourself, how dearly bought would be every charm of that refinement you covet for her, at the price of a heart weakened in its attachment to home, bereft of the simple faith that there was no disgrace in poverty. Think, above all," cried she, — and for the first time her lips trembled, and her eyes swam — "think, above all, we cannot give her up for ever; and yet how is she to come back again to these humble fortunes, and the daily toil that she will then regard with shame and disgust. I ask not how differently shall we appear in her eyes, for I know that, however changed her habits, how wide soever be the range of thought knowledge may have imparted, her fond, true heart will still be all our own; but can you risk her fortunes on an ocean like this? — can you peril all her future for so little?"

"To hear you talk, Nelly, one might think she was going to Jerusalem or Australia; sure, after all, it's only a few days away from us she'll be, and as for

the dangers, devil a one of them I see. Peter Dalton's daughter is not likely to be ill-treated anywhere. We were always a 'good warrant' for taking care of our own; and to make short of it, I wish it, and Kate herself wishes it; and I don't see why our hopes should not be as strong as your fears."

"You remember, too, Papa, that Doctor Grounsell agreed with me, and spoke even more strongly than I did against the scheme."

"And didn't I pay him off for his interference? Didn't I give him a bit of my mind about it, and tell him that, because a man was employed as a doctor in a family that he ought not to presume to advise them on their own affairs? Faith, I don't think he'll trouble another patient with his counsel."

"We must not forget, Sir, that if his counsel came unasked, his skill was unrequited; both came from a nature that wished us well."

"The advice and the physic were about the same value; both made me sick; and so you're like to do if you worry me any longer. I tell you now, my mind's made up, and go she shall!"

"Oh, Papa, not if dear Nelly thinks —"

"What's that to me; don't I know more of the world than she does! Am I come to this time of life to be taught by a slip of a girl that never was ten miles out of her home. Sit down there now, and write the answer."

There was a stern determination in the way these last words were uttered, that told Nelly how fruitless would be all further opposition. She had long since remarked, besides, how her father's temper re-acted upon his health, and how invariably any prolonged

excitement terminated in an attack of gout. Increasing age gave to these accesses of malady a character of danger, which she already began to remark with deep anxiety. Now she saw that immediate compliance with his wishes was the only alternative left.

She seated herself at the table, and prepared to write. For some seconds the disturbance of her thoughts, the mingled crowd of sensations that filled her mind, prevented all power of calm consideration; but the struggle was soon over, and she wrote on rapidly.

So silent was the chamber, so hushed was all within it, that the scratching noise of the pen alone broke the stillness. Speedily glided her hand across the paper, on which two heavy tears had already fallen — burning drops of sorrow that gushed from a fevered brain! A whole world of disaster, a terrible catalogue of ill, revealed itself before her; but she wrote on. She felt that she was to put in motion the series of events whose onward course she never could control, as though she was to push over a precipice the rock that in its downward rush would carry ruin and desolation along with it; but she wrote on.

At last she ceased, and all was still; not a sound was heard in the little room, and Nelly leaned her head down upon the table and wept.

But while she wept, she prayed, — prayed, that if the season of trouble her thoughts foreshadowed should be inevitable, and that if the cup of sorrow must, indeed, be drained, that strength might be sent them for the effort. It might have been that her mind exaggerated the perils of separation, and the dangers that would beset one of Kate's temper and disposition.

Her own bereavement might have impressed her with the misery that follows an unhappy attachment; and her reflective nature, shadowed by an early sorrow, might have coloured too darkly a future of such uncertainty. But a deep foreboding, like a heavy weight, lay upon her heart, and she was powerless to resist it.

These instincts of our nature are not to be undervalued, nor confounded with the weak and groundless terrors of the frivolous. The closing petals of the flower as the storm draws nigh, the wild cry of the sea-bird as the squall is gathering, the nestling of the sheep within the fold while yet the hurricane has not broke, — are signs, that, to the observant instincts, peril comes not unannounced.

"Shall I read it, Papa?" said she, as she raised her head, and turned towards him a look of calm and beaming affection.

"You needn't" said he, roughly. "Of course, it's full of all the elegant phrases women like to cheat each other with. You said she will go; that's enough."

Nelly tried to speak, but the words would not come, and she merely nodded an acquiescence.

"And, of course, too, you told her Ladyship that if it wasn't to a near relation of the family, — one that had a kind of a right, as I may say, to ask her, — that I'd never have given my consent. Neither would I!"

"I said that you could give no higher proof of your confidence in Lady Hester's goodness and worth, than in committing to her charge all that we hold so dear. I spoke of our gratitude," her voice faltered here, and she hesitated for a second or so; our gra-

titude! — strange word to express the feeling with which we part from what we cling to so fondly! — "and I asked of her to be the mother of her who had none!"

"Oh, Nelly, I cannot go, — I cannot leave you!" burst out Kate, as she knelt down, and buried her head in her sister's lap. "I feel already how weak and unable I am to live among strangers, away from you and dear Papa. I have need of you both!"

"May I never leave this spot if you 're not enough to drive me mad!" exclaimed Dalton. "You cried two nights and a day because there was opposition to your going. You fretted till your eyes were red, and your cheeks all furrowed with tears; and now that you get leave to go, — now that I consent to — to — to sacrifice, — ay, to sacrifice my domestic enjoyments to your benefit, — you turn short round and say you won't go."

"Nay, nay, Papa," said Nelly, mildly; "Kate but owns with what fears she would consent to leave us, and in this shows a more fitting mind to brave what may come, than if she went forth with a heart brimful of its bright anticipations, and only occupied with a future of splendour and enjoyment."

"I ask you again, is it into the back woods of Newfoundland — is it into the deserts of Arabia she's going?" said Dalton, ironically.

"The country before her has perils to the full as great, if not greater than either," rejoined Nelly, lowly.

"There 's a ring at the bell," said Dalton, perhaps not sorry to cut short a discussion in which his own doubts and fears were often at variance with his words; for while opposing Nelly with all his might, he was

frequently forced to coincide secretly with that he so stoutly resisted. Vanity alone rose above every other motive, and even hardened his heart against separation and absence from his favourite child. Vanity to think that *his* daughter would be the admired beauty in the *salons* of the great and highly-born — that she would be daily moving in a rank the most exalted — that his dear Kate would be the attraction of courts — the centre of adulation wherever she went. So blinded was he by false reasoning, that he actually fancied himself a martyr to his daughter's future advancement, and that this inveterate egotism was a high and holy self-denial! "My worst enemy never called me selfish," was the balm that he ever laid on his chafed spirit, and always with success. It would, however, have been rather the part of friend, than of enemy, to have whispered that selfishness was the very bane and poison of his nature. It was his impulse in all the wasteful extravagance of his early life. It was his motive in all the struggles of his adversity. To sustain a mock rank — to affect a mock position — to uphold a mock standard of gentility, he was willing to submit to a thousand privations of his children and himself; and to gratify a foolish notion of family pride, he was ready to endure anything — even to separation from all he held dearest.

"Lady Hester's Courier has come for the answer to her note, Papa," said Nelly, twice over, before Dalton heard her, for he was deep sunk in his own musings.

"Let him come in and have a glass of wine," said Dalton. "I 'd like to ask him a few questions about these people."

"Oh, Papa!" whispered Nelly, in a tone at once so reproachful, that the old man coloured and looked away.

"I meant about what time they were to start on the journey," said he, confusedly.

"Lady Hester told us they should leave this to-morrow, Sir."

"Short notice for us. How is Kate to have all her clothes packed, and everything arranged? I don't think that is treating us with much respect, Nelly."

"They have waited four days for our decision, Papa — remember that."

"Aye, to be sure. I was forgetting that; and she came every day to press the matter more and more; and there was no end to the note-writing besides. I must say that nothing could beat their politeness. It was a mighty nice attention, the old man coming himself to call here; and a fine hale good-looking man he is! a better figure than ever his son will be. I don't much like Mr. George, as they call him."

"Somewhat colder, and more reserved I think, than the other," said Nelly. "But about this answer, Papa?"

"What a hurry they 're in. Is it a return to a writ, that they must press for it this way? Well, well, I ought to be used to all manner of interruptions and disturbances by this time. Fetch me a candle, till I seal it;" and he sighed, as he drew forth his old-fashioned watch, to which by a massive steel chain the great family seal was attached, firmly persuaded that in the simple act he was about to perform, he was achieving a mighty labour, at the cost of much fatigue. "No rest for the wicked! as my old father used to

say," muttered he, in a happy ignorance whether the philosophy emanated from his parent, or from some higher authority. "One would think that at my time of life a man might look for a little peace and ease; but Peter Dalton hasn't such luck! Give me the letter," said he, querulously. "There is Peter Dalton's hand and seal — his act and will," muttered he, with a half-solemnity, as he pressed the wax with his heavy signet. "'*Semper eadem;*' there's the ancient motto of our house, and faith I believe Counsellor O'Shea was right, when he translated it 'The devil a better!'"

He read the address two or three times over to himself, as if there was something pleasurable in the very look of the words, and then he turned his glance towards Hans, as in a dreamy half-consciousness he sat still, contemplating the little statue of Margarete.

"Isn't it droll to think we'd be writing to the first in the land, and an old toymaker sitting beside the fire all the time," said Dalton, as he shook his head thoughtfully, in the firm conviction that he had uttered a very wise and profound remark. "Well — well — well! Life is a queer thing!"

"Is it not stranger still, that we should have won the friendship of poor Hanserl, than have attracted the notice of Lady Hester," said Nelly. "Is it not a prouder thought that we have drawn towards us from affectionate interest the kindness that has no touch of condescension?"

"I hope you are not comparing the two," said Dalton, angrily. "What's the creature muttering to himself?"

"It's Gretchen's song he's trying to remember," said Kate.

"Nach ihm nur schau' ich
Zum Fenster hinaus!"

said Hans, in a low, distinct voice. "'Was kommt nach,' — what comes next, Fräulein?"

"You must ask sister Nelly, Hanserl," said Kate; but Nelly was standing behind the massive stove, her face covered with her hands.

"'Zum Fenster hinaus,'" repeated he, slowly; "and, then, Fräulein? and then?"

"Tell him, Nelly; tell him what follows."

"Nach ihm nur schau' ich
Zum Fenster hinaus;
Nach ihm nur geh' ich
Aus dem Haus!"

repeated she.

"Ja, ja!" cried Hans, delightedly —

"Nach ihm nur geh' ich
Aus dem Haus!"

"What does that mean?" said Dalton, with impatience.

"It's Gretchen's song, Papa," said Nelly —

"His figure I gaze on,
O'er and o'er;
His step I follow
From the door!"

"I hope it isn't in love the creature is," said Dalton; and he laughed heartily at the conceit, turning at the same time his look from the Dwarf, to bestow a most complacent glance at the remains of his own once handsome stature. "Oh, dear! oh, dear!" sighed he; "isn't it wonderful, but there isn't a creth or a cripple that walks the earth that hasn't a sweetheart!"

A cough, purposely loud enough to announce his presence, here came from the Courier in the antechamber, and Dalton remembered that the letter had not yet been despatched.

"Give it to him, Nelly," said he, curtly.

She took the letter in her hand, but stood for a second or two as if powerless to move.

"Must it be so, dearest Papa," said she, and the words almost choked her utterance.

Dalton snatched the letter from her fingers, and left the room. His voice was heard for an instant in conversation with the Courier, and the moment after the door banged heavily, and all was still.

"It is done, Kate!" said she, throwing her arms around her sister's neck. "Let us now speak of the future; we have much to say, and short time to say it; and first let us help poor Hans down stairs."

The Dwarf, clutching up the wooden image, suffered himself to be aided with all the submissiveness of a patient child, and, with one at either side of him, slowly crept down the stairs to his own chamber. Disengaging himself by a gentle effort as he gained his door, Hans removed his cap from his head and made a low and deep obeisance to each of the girls separately, while he bade them a good night.

"Leb wohl, Hanserl, Leb wohl!" said Kate, taking his hand affectionately. "Be ever the true friend that thou hast proved hitherto, and let me think of thee, when far away, with gratitude."

"Why this? How so, Fräulein?" said Hans, anxiously; why "fare-well? why sayst thou Leb wohl, when it is 'but good night?'"

"Kate is about to leave us for a short space," said Nelly, affecting to appear at ease and calm. "She is going to Italy, Hanserl."

"Das schöne Land! that lovely land," muttered he, over and over. "Dahin, dahin," cried he, pointing with his finger to the southward, "where the gold orange blooms. There would I wander, too."

"You 'll not forget me, Hanserl," said the young girl, kindly.

"Over the great Alps and away!" said Hans, still talking to himself; "over the high snow peaks which cast their shadows on our cold land, but have terraces for the vine and olive-garden, yonder! Thou 'lt leave us, then, Fräulein?"

"But for a little while, Hans, to come back afterwards and tell thee all I have seen."

"They come not back from the sunshine to the shade," said Hans, solemnly. "Thou 'lt leave not the palace for the peasant's hut; but think of us, Fräulein, think sometimes, when the soft sirocco is playing through thy glossy hair — when sounds of music steal over thy senses among the orange groves, and near the shadows of old temples — think of this simple Fatherland and its green valleys. Think of them with whom thou wert so happy, too! Splendour thou mayst have — it is thy beauty's right; but be not proud, Fräulein. Remember what Chamisso tells us, 'Die Noth lehrt beten,' 'Want teaches Prayer,' and to that must thou come, however high thy fortune."

"Kate will be our own wherever she be," said Nelly, clasping her sister affectionately to her side.

"Bethink thee well, Fräulein, in thy wanderings,

that the great and the beautiful are brethren of the good and the simple. The cataract and the dewdrop are kindred! Think of all that teachest thee to think of home; and remember well, that when thou losest the love of this humble hearth thou art in peril. If to any of thy childish toys thou sayst, 'Ich liebe dich nicht mehr,' then art thou changed indeed." Hans sate down upon his little bed as he spoke, and covered his face with his hands.

Nelly watched him silently for a few seconds, and then with a gentle hand closed the door and led Kate away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Cares and Crosses.

THE lamp in Kate Dalton's chamber was still burning, when the morning dawned, and by its uncertain flicker might be seen the two sisters, who, clasped in each other's arms, sat upon the low settle-bed. Nelly, pale and motionless, supported Kate, as, overcome by watching and emotion, she had fallen into a heavy slumber. Not venturing to stir, lest she should awaken her, Nelly had leaned against the wall for support, and in her unmoved features and deathly pallor, seemed like some monumental figure of sorrow.

It was not alone the grief of an approaching separation that oppressed her; sad as it was to part from one to whom she had been mother and sister too, her affliction was tinged with a deeper colouring in her fears for the future. Loving Kate dearer than anything in the world, she was alive to all the weak traits of her character; her credulity — her trustfulness — her fondness for approbation even from those whose judgments she held lightly — her passion for admiration even in trifles — were well known to her; and while, perhaps, these very failings, like traits of childish temperament, had actually endeared her the more to Nelly, she could not but dread their effect when they came to be exercised in the world of strangers.

Not that Nelly could form the very vaguest con-

ception of what that world was like. Its pleasures and its perils, its engagements and hazards, were all unknown to her. It had never been even the dream-land of her imagination. Too humble in spirit, too lowly by nature to feel companionship with the great and titled, she had associated all her thoughts with those whose life is labour; with them were all her sympathies. There was a simple beauty in the unchanging fortune of the peasant's life — such as she had seen in the Schwarzwald, for instance — that captivated her. That peaceful domesticity was the very nearest approach to happiness, to her thinking, and she longed for the day when her father might consent to the obscurity and solitude of some nameless "Dorf" in the dark recesses of that old forest. With Frank and Kate such a lot would have been a paradise. But one was already gone, and she was now to lose the other, too. "Strange turn of fortune," as she said, "that prosperity should be more cruel than adversity. In our days of friendless want and necessity we held together; it is only when the promise of brighter destinies is dawning that we separate."

"It is but selfishness after all," thought she, "to wish for an existence like this; such humble and lowly fortunes might naturally enough become 'lame Nelly,' but Frank, the high-hearted, daring youth, with ambitious hopes and soaring aspirations, demands another and a different sphere of action; and Kate, whose attractions would grace a court, might well sorrow over a lot of such ignoble obscurity. What would not my sorrow and self-reproach be if I saw, that, in submitting to the same monotony of this quietude, they should have become wearied and careless — neither taking

pleasure in the simple pastimes of the people, nor stooping to their companionship, and thus all may be for the best," said she, half aloud, "if I could but feel courage to think so. We may each of us be but following his true road in life."

A long intimacy with affliction will very frequently be found to impress even a religiously-disposed mind with a strong tinge of fatalism. The apparent hopelessness of all effort to avert calamity, or stem the tide of evil fortune often suggests, as its last consolation, the notion of a predetermined destiny, to which we are bound to submit with patient trustfulness; a temperament of great humility aids this conviction. Both of these conditions were Nelly's; she had "supped sorrow" from her cradle, while her estimate of herself was the very lowest possible. "I suppose it is so," said she again, "all is for the best."

She already pictured to herself the new spring this change of fortune would impart to her father's life — with what delight he would read the letters from his children — how he would once more, through them, taste of that world whose pleasures he was so fondly attached to. "*I* never could have yielded him a gratification like this," said Nelly, as the tears rose in her eyes. "I am but the image of our fallen fortunes, and in me, 'poor lame Nelly,' he can but see reflected our ruined lot. All is for the best, it must be so," sighed she, heavily; and just as the words escaped, her father, with noiseless step, entered the chamber.

"To be sure, it is Nelly, darling," said he, as he sat down near her, "and glad I am that you 've come to reason at last. 'T is plain enough this isn't the way the Daltons ought to be passing their life in

a little hole of a place without society or acquaintance of any kind. You and I may bear it, not but it's mighty hard upon me sometimes, too; but Kate there, just look at her and say, is it a girl like that should be wasting away her youth in a dreary village? Lady Hester tells me, and sure nobody should know better, that there never was the time in the world when real beauty had the same chance as now, and I'd like to see the girl that could stand beside her. Do you know, Nelly," here he drew closer, so as to speak in a whisper — "do you know that I do be fancying the strangest things might happen to us yet — that Frank might be a great General, and Kate married to, God knows what sort of a grandee, with money enough to redeem Mount Dalton, and lay my old bones in the churchyard with my ancestors! I can't get it out of my head, but it will come about somehow. What do you think yourself?"

"I'm but an indifferent castle-builder, Papa," said she, laughing softly. "I rarely attempt anything beyond a peasant-hut or a shealing!"

"And nobody could make the one or the other more neat and comfortable, that I'll say for you, Nelly. It would have a look of home about it before you were a day under the roof!"

The young girl blushed deeply; for, humble as the praise might have sounded to other ears, to hers it was the most touching she could have listened to.

"I'm not flattering you a bit. 'Tis your own mother you take after; you might put her down in the bleakest spot of Ireland, and 't is a garden she'd make it. Let her stop for shelter in a cabin, and before the shower was over you'd not know the place. I would be all

swept and clean, and the dishes ranged neatly on the dresser; and the pig — she couldn't abide a pig — turned out, and the hens driven into the cow-shed, and the children's faces washed, and their hair combed, and, maybe, the little gossoon of five years old upon her knee, saying his 'Hail, Mary,' or his 'A B C,' while she was teaching his mother how to wind the thread off the wheel, for she could spin a hank of yarn as well as any cottier's wife in the townland! The kind creature she was! But she never had a taste for real diversion; it always made her low-spirited and sad."

"Perhaps the pleasures you speak of were too dearly purchased, Papa," said Nelly.

"Indeed, maybe they were," said he, dubiously, and as though the thought had now occurred for the first time; "and now that you say it, I begin to believe it was that same that might have fretted her. The way she was brought up, too, made her think so too. That brother was always talking about wastefulness and extravagance, and so on; and, if it was in her nature, he'd have made her as stingy as himself; and look what it comes to after all. *We* spent it when we had it, the Daltons are a good warrant for that, and there was he grubbing and grabbing all his days, to leave it after him to a rich man, that doesn't know whether he has so many thousands more or not."

Nelly made no reply, not wishing to encourage, by the slightest apparent interest, the continuance on the theme, which invariably suggested her father's gloomiest reveries.

"Is that her trunk, Nelly?" said Dalton, breaking silence after a long interval, and pointing to an old

and journey-worn vallise, that lay half open upon the floor.

"Yes, Papa," said Nelly, with a sigh.

"Why, it's a mean-looking, scrubby bit of a thing; sure it's not the size of a good tea-chest!" said he, angrily.

"And yet too roomy for all its contents, Papa. Poor Kate's wardrobe is a very humble one."

"I'd like to know where's the shops here; where's the milliners and the haberdashers. Are we in College Green or Grafton Street, that we can just send out and have everything at our hand's turn? 'T isn't on myself I spend the money. Look at these gaiters; they're nine years old next March; and the coat on my back was made by Peter Stevens, that's in his grave now! The greatest enemy ever I had could not face me down that I only took care of myself. If that was my way, would I be here now? See the rag I'm wearing round my throat, a piece of old worsted like a rug, a thing —"

He stopped, and stammered, and then was silent altogether, for he suddenly remembered it was Nelly herself who had worked the article in question.

"Nay, Papa," broke she in, with her own happy smile; "you may give it to Andy to-morrow, for I've made you a smart new one, of your own favourite colours too, the Dalton green and white."

"Many a time I've seen the same colours coming in first on the Corralin course!" cried Dalton, with enthusiasm; for at the impulse of a new word his mind could turn from a topic of deep and painful interest to one in every way its opposite. "You were too young to remember it; but you were there, in the 'landau,'

with your mother, when Baithershin won the Murra handicap, the finest day's flat racing — I have it from them that seen the best in England — that ever was run in the kingdom. I won eight hundred pounds on it, and, by the same token, lost it all in the evening at 'blind hookey,' with old Major Haggs, of the 5th Foot — not to say a trifle more besides. And that's her trunk!" said he, after another pause, his voice dropping at the words, as though to say, "What a change of fortune is there!" "I wonder neither of you hadn't the sense to take my old travelling-chest, that's twice the size, and as heavy as a lead coffin besides. Sorrow one would ever know if she hadn't clothes for a whole lifetime! Two men wouldn't carry it upstairs when it's empty."

"When even this vallise is too large, Papa?"

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" broke in Dalton; "you've no contrivance, after all. Don't you see that it's not what's inside I'm talking about at all, but the show before the world. Didn't I live at Mount Dalton with the fat of the land, and every comfort a gentleman could ask, five years and eight months after I was ruined? And hadn't I credit wherever I went, and for whatever I ordered? And why? Because of the house and place! I was like the big trunk beyond; nobody knew how little there was in it. Oh, Nelly, dear, when you've seen as much of life as me, you'll know that one must be up to many a thing for appearance' sake."

Nelly sighed, but made no reply. Perhaps in secret she thought how much trouble a little sincerity with the world would save us.

"We 'll be mighty lonesome after her," said he, after a pause.

Nelly nodded her head in sadness.

"I was looking over the map last night, and it ain't so far away, after all," said Dalton. "'Tisn't much more than the length of my finger on the paper."

"Many a weary mile may lie within that space," said Nelly, softly.

"And I suppose we 'll hear from her every week, at least?" said Dalton, whose mind vacillated between joy and grief, but still looked for its greatest consolations from without.

Poor Nelly was, however, little able to furnish these. Her mind saw nothing but sorrow for the present; and, for the future, difficulty, if not danger.

"You give one no comfort at all," said Dalton, rising impatiently. "That 's the way it will be always now, when Kate goes. No more gaiety in the house — not a song nor a merry laugh! I see well what a dreary life there is before me."

"Oh, dearest Papa, I 'll do my very best, not to replace her, for that I never could do, but to make your days less wearisome. It will be such pleasure, too, to talk of her, and think of her! to know of her happiness, and to fancy all the fair stores of knowledge she will bring back with her, when she comes home at last!"

"If I could only live to see them back again, Frank and Kate, one at each side of me, that 's all I ask for in this world now," muttered he, as he stole noiselessly away, and closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Preparation for the Road.

If the arrival of a great family at a hotel be a scene of unusual bustle and excitement, with teeming speculations as to the rank and the wealth of the new comers, the departure has also its interests, and even of a higher nature. In the former case all is vague, shadowy, and uncertain; the eye of the spectator wanders from the muffled figures as they descend, to scrutinise the lacqueys, and even the luggage, as indicative of the strangers' habits and condition; and even to the shrewd perceptions of that dread functionary — the head-waiter — the identity of the travellers assumes no higher form, nor any more tangible shape, than that they are No. 42, or 57!

When the hour of leave-taking has come, however, their characters have become known — their tastes and habits understood, and no mean insight obtained into their prejudices, their passions, and their pursuits. The imposing old Gentleman, whose rubicund nose and white waistcoat are the guarantees for a taste in port, has already inspired the landlord with a sincere regard. "My Lady's" half-invalid caprices about diet, and air, and sunshine, have all written themselves legibly in "the bill." The tall son's champagne-score incurred of a night, and uncounted of a morning, are not unrecorded virtues, while even the pale young ladies,

whose sketching propensities involved donkeys, and ponies, and picnics, go not unremembered.

Their hours of rising and retiring — their habits of society or reclusion — their preferences for the *Post* or the *Times*, have all silently been ministering to the estimate formed of them, so that in the commonest items of the hotel ledger are the materials for their history. And with what true charity are their characters weighed! How readily does mine host forgive the transgressions which took their origin in his own Burgundy — how blandly smile at the follies begotten of his Johannisberg! With what angelic temper does the hostess pardon the little liberties "young gentlemen from college *will* take!" Oh! if our dear, dear friends would but read us with half the charity, or even bestow upon our peccadilloes a tithe of this forgiveness! And why should it not be so? What are these same friends and acquaintances but guests in the same great inn which we call "the world;" and who, as they never take upon them to settle our score, need surely not trouble themselves about the "items."

While the Daltons were still occupied in the manner our last chapter has described, the "Hotel de Russie" was a scene of considerable bustle; the preparations for departure engaging every department of the household within doors and without. There were carriage-springs to be lashed with new cordage — drag-chains new tipped with steel — axles to smear — hinges to oil — imperials to buckle on — cap-cases to be secured — and then what a deluge of small articles to be stowed away in most minute recesses, and yet be always at hand when called for. Cushions and cordials, and "chauffe-pieds," and "Quarterlys,"

smelling-boxes, and slippers, and spectacles, and cigar-cases, journals and "John Murray's" — to be disposed of in the most convenient places. Every corridor and landing was blocked up with baggage, and the Courier wiped his forehead, and "*sacréd*" in half desperation at the mountain of trunks and portmanteaus that lay before him.

"This is not ours!" said he, as he came to a very smart vallise of lacquered leather, with the initials A. J. in brass on the top.

"No; that 's Mr. Jekyl's," said Mr. George's man, Twig; "he ain 't a-goin' with *you* — he travels in our britska."

"I 'm more like de Conducteur of a diligence than a family Courier," muttered the other, sulkily. "I know nothing of de baggage, since we take up strangers at every stage! and always arme Teufeln — poor devils — that have not a sous en poche!"

"What 's the matter now, Mister Greg'ry," said Twig, who very imperfectly understood the other's jargon.

"The matter is, I will resign my 'fonction,' — je m'en vais — dat 's all! This is noting besser than an 'Eil-wagen' mit passengers! Fust of all we have de Doctor, as dey call him — wid his stuff birds and beasts, his dried blumen and sticks, till de roof is like de Jardin des Plantes at Paris, and he himself like de bear in de middle; dem we have das verfluchte parroquet of milady, and Flounce, de lap-dog, that must drink every post-station, and run up all de hills for exercise! Dam! Ich bin kein Hund, and needn 't run up de hills too! Mademoiselle Celestine have a what d'ye call 'Affe' — a ape! and though he be little, a reg'lar teufelchen to hide de keys and de

money, when he find 'em; and dem dere is de yong lady collectin' all de stones off de road — lauter paving stones — which she smash wid a leetle hammer! Ach Gott — what is de world grow! when a Fräulein fall in love wid Felsen and Steine!"

"Monsieur Grégoire! Monsieur Grégoire!" screamed out a sharp voice from a window over head.

"Mademoiselle!" replied he, politely touching his cap to the femme-de-chambre.

"Be good enough, Monsieur Grégoire, to have my trunks taken down — there are two in the fourgon, and a cap-case on the large carriage."

"Hagel and Sturm — they are under everything. How am I —?"

"I can't possibly say — broke she in — but it must be done!"

"Can't you wait, Mademoiselle, till we reach Basle?"

"I'm going away, Monsieur Grégoire. I'm off to Paris!" was the reply, as the speaker closed the sash and disappeared.

"What does she say?" inquired Twig, who, as this dialogue was carried on in French, was in total ignorance of its meaning.

"She have given her 'démission,'" said the Courier, pompously — "resign her portfeuille, and she have made a very bad affair! — dat's all. Your gros milor, is very often bien bête — he is very often rude, savage, forget his manners, and all dat. But," — and here his voice swelled into the full soundness of a perfect connexion — "but he is *alway* rich. Ja — ja. Immer reich!" said he over to himself. "Allons! now to get at her verdammte baggage! de two trunks,

and de leetle box, and de ape, and de sac, and de four or five baskets! Diable d'affaire! Monsieur Tig, do me the grace to mount on high, dere, and give me dat box."

"I've nothing to say to your carriage, Mister Greg'ry; I'm the Captain's Gentlemen, and never do take any but a single-handed situation;" and, with this very haughty speech, Mr. Twig lighted a fresh cigar and strolled away.

"Alle böse Teufeln holen de good for nichts," sputtered Grégoire, who now waddled into the house to seek for assistance.

Whatever apathy and indifference he might have met with from the English servants, the people of the hotel were like his bond-slaves. Old and young, men and women, the waiter and the ostler, and the chamber-maid, — and that strange species of *grande utilité*, which in German households goes by the name of "Haus-knecht" — a compound of boots, scullion, porter, pimp, and drudge, — were all at his command. Nor was he an over-mild monarch; a running fire of abuse and indignity accompanied every order he gave, and he stimulated their alacrity by the most insulting allusions to their personal defects and deficiencies.

Seated upon a capacious cap-case, with his courier's cap set jauntily on one side, his meerschaum like a sceptre in his hand, Grégoire gave out his edicts right royally; and soon the court-yard was strewn with trunks, boxes, and bags, of every shape, size, and colour. The scene, indeed, was not devoid of tumult; for, while each of the helpers screamed away at the top of his throat, and Grégoire rejoined in

shouts that would have done credit to a bull, the parrot gave vent to the most terrific cries and yells as the ape poked him through the bars of his cage with the handle of a parasol.

"There, that 's one of them," cried out Monsieur Grégoire, "that round box beside you; down with it here."

"Monsieur Grégoire — Monsieur Grégoire," cried Mademoiselle from the window once more.

The Courier looked up, and touched his cap.

"I 'm not going, Monsieur Grégoire; the affair is arranged."

"Ah! I am charmed to hear it, Mademoiselle," said he, smiling in seeming ecstasy, while he muttered a malediction between his teeth.

"Miladi has made submission, and I forgive everything. You must pardon all the trouble I 've given you."

"These happy tidings have made me forget it," said he, with a smile that verged upon a grin. "Peste!" growled he, under his breath; "we 'd unpacked the whole fourgon."

"Ah que vous êtes aimable!" said she, sighing.

"Belle tigresse!" exclaimed he, returning the leer she bestowed, and the window was once more closed upon her exit.

"I submitted to the labour, in the hope we had done with you for ever!" said he, wiping his forehead; "and la voilà — there you are — back again. Throw that ape down; away with him, cursed beast," cried he, venting his spite upon the minion, since he dared not attack the mistress. "But what have we here?"

This latter exclamation was caused by the sudden entrance into the court-yard of two porters, carrying an enormous trunk, whose iron fastenings and massive padlock gave it the resemblance of an emigrant's sea-chest. A few paces behind walked Mr. Dalton, followed again by Old Andy, who, with a huge oil-silk umbrella under one arm, and a bundle of cloaks, shawls, and hoods on the other, made his way with no small difficulty.

Grégoire surveyed the procession with cool amazement, and then, with a kind of mock-civility, he touched his cap, and said, "You have mistak de road, saar; de diligenz-office is over de way."

"And who told you I wanted it?" said Dalton, sternly. "Maybe, I'm just where I ought to be! Isn't this Sir Stafford Onslow's coach?"

"Yes, saar; but you please to remember, it is not de 'Eil-wagen.'"

"Just hold your prate, my little chap, and it will be pleasanter, and safer — ay safer, too, dy'e mind. You see that trunk there; it's to go up with the luggage, and be kept dry, for there's valuable effects inside."

"Dat is not a trunk; it is a sentry-house, a watsch-box; no gentleman's carriage ever support a ting of dat dimension!"

"It's a trunk, and belongs to me, and my name is Peter Dalton, as the letters there will show you; and so no more about it, but put it up at once."

"I have de orders about a young lady's luggage, but none about a great coffin, with iron hoops," said Grégoire, tartly.

"Be quiet, now, and do as I tell you, my little

stamp and semblance of the others? Oh, if she could believe it! If she could but fancy that, at some future time, such graceful elegance should be her own, that gentle languor, that chastened quietude of Sydney, or that sparkling lightness of Lady Hester herself!

"What time de horses, Saar?" said the Courier, popping his head into the room.

"I scarcely know — what do you say, Lady Hester?"

"I 'm quite ready — this instant if you like — indeed, I 'm always the first," said she, gaily; "nobody travels with less preparation than I do. There, see all I want!" and she pointed to a fan, and a book, and a smelling-bottle; as if all her worldly effects and requirements went no further, and that four great imperials and a dozen capacious boxes were not packed with her wardrobe. "I do detest the worry and fuss some people make about a journey for a week, or even a month beforehand; they unsettle themselves and every one around them; putting under lock and key half the things of every-day utility, and making a kind of 'gaol-delivery' of all the imprisoned old cloaks and dresses of the toilet. As for me, I take the road as I 'd go to the Opera, or drive out in the Park — I ask for my bonnet, that 's all."

There was some truth in this. Her Ladyship did, in fact, give herself not a whit more thought or consideration for preparation of any kind, than if the excursion had been a promenade.

"It is now two o'clock," said Sir Stafford, "and if we mean to reach Offenburg to-night we must not lose more time. Isn't it Offenburg you advised as our halt, Mr. Jekyl?"

"Yes, Sir Stafford," simpered out that bland personage. "It is a most comfortable little inn, and a very praiseworthy cook."

"By-the-by, has any one thought of ordering luncheon here?" cried George.

Jekyl gave a nod, to intimate that he had taken that precaution.

"And Mr. Jekyl," said Lady Hester; "what of those bullfinches, for I must have them?"

"They are safely caged and packed in our britska, Madam. You 'll also find that your sketch-book, and the water-colours, are available at any moment, Miss Onslow," said he, with a respectful gesture. She smiled, and bowed her thanks in silence.

"And de horses, Saar?" asked the Courier once more: for during this colloquy he had been standing in expectation of his orders.

"Do tell him, Mr. Jekyl," said Lady Hester, with that tone of languor that bespoke her dislike to the trouble of even a trifling degree of resolution.

"I think we shall say in one hour, Grégoire," said Jekyl, mildly. "And, perhaps, it would be better that you should see —" What this matter was that the Courier should bestow his special attention upon, is not on record in this history, inasmuch as that when the speaker had reached thus far, he passed out of the door, talking as he went, in a low and confidential voice.

"Capital fellow — Jekyl!" exclaimed George; "he forgets nothing."

"He appears to be a most accomplished traveller," said Sir Stafford.

"And such a linguist!" said Sydney.

"And so amusing!" added my Lady.

"And such a rogue!" muttered Dalton to himself, "who, although so open to any imposition that took the form of flattery, could at once detect the knavery that was practised upon others, and who, at a glance, read the character of the new acquaintance.

"Don't you like the stir and excitement of the road, my dear child," said Lady Hester to Kate, who, with very red eyes and very pale cheeks, stood in a window to avoid being observed. "There is something so adventurous about a journey always. One may be robbed, you know, or the carriage upset, as happened to ourselves t'other day; or mistaken for somebody else, and carried off to prison. It gives such a flurry to the spirits to think of these things, and a life of monotony is so very detestable."

Kate tried to smile an assent, and Lady Hester ran on in the same strain, extolling the delights of anything and everything that promised an excitement. "You know, my dear child, that this little place has almost been the death of me," added she. "I never was so bored in all my life; and I vow I shall detest a mill and a pine-forest to the last day I live. If it had not been for you and your sweet sister, I do not know what we should have done; but it 's all over now. The dreary interval is passed, and when we turn the foot of that hill yonder, we shall have seen the last of it."

Kate's heart was almost bursting as she heard these words. To speak thus of the little valley would have been a profanation at any time, but to do so now, when she was about to leave it — when she was

about to tear herself away from all the ties of love and affection, seemed an actual cruelty.

"Small places are my aversion," continued Lady Hester, who, when satisfied with her own talk, never cared much what effect it was producing upon others. "One grows down insensibly to the measure of a petty locality, with its little interests, its little people, and its little gossip — don't you think so, dear?"

"We were so happy here!" murmured Kate, in a voice that a choking fulness of her throat almost stifled.

"Of course you were, child, very happy; and it was very good of you to be so. Yes, very good and very right." Here Lady Hester assumed a peculiar tone, which she always put on whenever she fancied that she was moralising. "Natural amiability of disposition, and all that sort of thing, is very nice indeed; but there 's luncheon I see, and now, my dear, let us take our places without loss of time. George, will you give your arm to Miss Dalton? Mr. Dalton — but where 's Mr. Dalton?"

"Papa has taken him with him to his dressing-room," answered Sydney, "but begged you 'd not wait; they 'll be back presently."

"No lady does wait at luncheon," said Lady Hester, snappishly, while, drawing Kate's arm within her own, she led her into the adjoining room.

The party had scarcely seated themselves at table when they were joined by Jekyl. Indeed, Lady Hester had only time to complain of his absence when he appeared; for it was a trick of that gentleman's tact merely to make himself sufficiently regretted not to be blamed. And now he came to say that everything

was ready. The postilions in the saddle; the carriages drawn up before the door; the relays had all been ordered along the road; the supper bespoke for the end of the journey. These pleasant facts he contrived to season with a running fire of little gossip and mimicry, in which the landlord, and Grégoire, and Mademoiselle Celestine, were the individuals personated.

Never were Mr. Jekyl's peculiar abilities more in request; for the moment was an awkward and embarrassing one for all, and none, save himself, were able to relieve its seriousness. Even Nelly smiled at the witty sallies and playful conceits of this clever talker, and felt almost grateful to him for the momentary distraction he afforded her from gloomier thoughts. With such success did he exert himself, that all the graver sentiments of the occasion were swallowed up in the pleasant current of his small talk, and no time given for a thought of that parting which was but a few minutes distant. Sir Stafford and Mr. Dalton were not sorry to discover the party in this pleasant humour, and readily chimed in with the gaiety around them.

The bugle of the postilions at length announced that "time was up," and the half hour which German politeness accords to leave-taking expired. A dead silence succeeded the sound, and as if moved by the same instinctive feeling, the two sisters arose, and withdrew into a window. Close locked in each other's arms, neither could speak. Kate's thick sobs came fast and full, and her heart beat against her sister's side as though it were bursting. As for Nelly, all that she had meant to say, the many

things she had kept for the last moment, were forgotten, and she could but press the wet cheek to her own, and murmur a tremulous blessing.

"Oh, if I could but remain with you, Nelly dearest," sobbed Kate; "I feel even already my isolation. Is it too late, sister dear, is it too late to go back?"

"Not if this be not a sudden impulse of sorrow for parting Kate; not if you think you would be happier here."

"But Papa! how will he — what will he —"

She had not time for more, when her father joined them. A certain flurry of his manner showed that he was excited by talking and wine together. There was that in the expression of his features, too, that betokened a mind ill at ease with itself — a restless alternating between two courses.

"'T is you are the lucky girl, Kate," said he, drawing his arm around her, and pressing her to him. This day's good luck pays me off for many a hard blow of fortune. They 're kind people you are going with, real gentry, and our own blood into the bargain."

A thick, heavy sob, was all the answer she could make.

"To be sure you 're sorry; why wouldn't you be sorry, leaving your own home and going away among strangers; and 't is I am sorry to let you go!"

"Are you so, dearest Papa? Are you really sorry to part with me; would you rather I 'd stay behind with you and Nelly?" cried she, looking up at him with eyes swimming in tears.

"Would I — is it?" said he, eagerly, as he kissed her forehead twice; then, suddenly checking himself,

he said, in an altered voice, "but that would be selfish, Kate, nothing else than downright selfish. Ask Nelly, there, if that's my nature? Not that Nelly will ever give me too good a character!" added he, bitterly. But poor Ellen neither heard the question nor the taunt; her mind was travelling many a long mile away in realms of dreary speculation.

"I 'm sorry to interrupt a moment like this," said Sir Stafford, "but I believe I must take you away, Miss Dalton, our time is now of the shortest."

One fond and long embrace the sisters took, and Kate was led away between Sir Stafford and her father, while Nelly went through a round of leave-takings with the others, in a state of semi-consciousness that resembled a dream. The courteous flatteries of Lady Hester fell as powerless on her ear as the rougher good wishes of Grounsell. George Onslow's respectful manner was as unnoticed as the flippant smartness of Albert Jekyl's. Even Sydney's gentle attempt at consolation was heard without heeding; and when one by one they had gone and left her alone in that dreary room, she was not more aware of her solitude than when they stood around her.

Couriers and waiters passed in and out to see that nothing had been forgotten; doors were slammed on every side; loud voices were calling; all the turmoil of a departure was there, but she knew nothing of it. Even when the loud cracking of the postilions' whips echoed in the courtyard, and the quick clatter of horses' feet and heavy wheels resounded through the arched doorway, she was still unmoved; nor did she recover full liberty of thought till her father stood beside her, and said, "Come, Nelly, let us go home."

Then she arose, and took his arm without a word. She would have given her life to have been able to speak even a few words of comfort to the poor old man, whose cheeks were wet with tears, but she could not utter a syllable.

"Ay, indeed," muttered he, "it will be a dreary home now!"

Not another word was spoken by either as they trod their way along the silent streets, over which the coming gloom of evening threw a mournful shadow. They walked, with bent-down heads, as if actually fearing to recognise the objects that they had so often looked upon with *her*, and, slowly traversing the little Platz, they gained their own door. There they halted, and, from habit, pulled the bell. Its little tinkle, heard in the stillness, seemed suddenly to recal them both to thought, for Dalton, with a melancholy smile, said,

"'T is old Andy is coming now! 'T isn't *her* foot I hear! Oh, Nelly, Nelly, how did you ever persuade me to this! Sure I know I 'll never be happy again."

Nelly made no answer. The injustice of the speech was well atoned for in her mind by the thought that, in shifting the blame from himself to her, her father might find some sort of consolation; well satisfied to become the subject of his reproach, if the sacrifice could alleviate his sorrow.

"Take that chair away; throw it out of the window," cried he, angrily; "it breaks my heart to look at it." And with this he leaned his head upon the table, and sobbed like a child.

CHAPTER XX.

A very small "Interior."

In one of the most favoured spots of that pleasant quay, which goes by the name of the Lungo l'Arno, at Florence, there stood a small, miserable-looking, rickety old building, of two stories high, wedged in beween two massive and imposing palaces, as though a buffer to deaden the force of collision. In all probability it owed its origin to some petty usurpation, and had gradually grown up, from the unobtrusive humility of a cobbler's bulk, to the more permanent nuisance of stone and mortar. The space occupied was so small as barely to permit of a door and a little window beside it, within which hung a variety of bridles, halters, and such like gear, with here and there the brass-mounted harnessing of a Calasina, or the gay worsted tassels and fringed finery of a peasant's Barroccino. The little spot was so completely crammed with wares, that for all purposes of traffic it was useless; hence, everything that pertained to sale was carried on in the street, thus contributing by another ingredient to the annoyance of this misplaced residence. Threats, tyranny, bribery, seductions of twenty kinds, intimidation in as many shapes, had all failed in inducing its owner to remove to another part of the town. Gigi — every one in Florence is known by his christian name, and we never heard him called by any other — resisted oppression as

manfully as he was proof against softer influences, and held his ground, hammering away at his old "demi-piques," burnishing bits, and scouring housings, in utter indifference to the jarred nerves and chafed susceptibilities of his fine neighbours. It was not that the man was indifferent to money. It was not that the place was associated with any family reminiscences. It was not from its being very favourable to the nature of his dealings, since his chief customers were usually the frequenters of the less fashionable localities. It was the simple fact, that Gigi was a Florentine, and, like a Florentine, he saw no reason why he shouldn't have the sun and the Arno, as well as the Guiciardoni, who lived at his right, or the Rinuncini, who dwelt on his left hand.

Small and contracted as that miserable frontage was, the sun *did* shine upon it just as pleasantly as on its proud neighbours', and the bright Arno glided by with its laughing ripples; while, from the little window above stairs, the eye ranged over the cypress-clad hill of San Miniato, and the fair gardens of the Boboli. On one side lay the quaint old structure of the Ponte Vecchio, with its glittering stores of jewellery, and on the other the graceful elliptic arches of St. Trinita spanned the stream. The quay before the door was the chosen rallying point of all Florence; the promenade where lounged all its fashionables of an evening, as they descended from their carriages after the accustomed drive in the Cascini. The Guardie Nobili passed daily, in all their scarlet bravery, to and from the Pitti Palace; the Grand Ducal equipage never took any other road. A continual flow of travellers to the great hotels on the quay, contributed

its share of bustle and animation to the scene; so that here might be said to meet, as in a focus, all that made up the life, the stir, and the movement of the capital.

Full of amusement and interest as that moving panorama often is, our object is less to linger beside it, than, having squeezed our way between the chaotic wares of Gigi's shop, to ascend the little, dark, and creaking stairs, which leads to the first story, and into which we now beg to introduce our reader. There are but two rooms, each of them of the dimensions of closets, but furnished with a degree of pretension that cannot fail to cause amazement as you enter. Silk draperies, carved cabinets, bronzes, china, chairs of ebony, tables of buhl, a Persian rug on the floor, an alabaster lamp suspended from the ceiling, miniatures in handsome frames, and armour, cover the walls; while, scattered about, are richly-bound books, and prints, and drawings in water-colour. Through the half-drawn curtain that covers the doorway — for there is no door — you can peep into the back room, where a lighter and more modern taste prevails; the gold-sprigged curtains of a French bed, and the Bohemian glass that glitters everywhere, bespeaking another era of decorative luxury.

It is not with any invidious pleasure for depreciation, but purely in the interests of truth, that we must now tell our reader, that, of all this seeming elegance and splendour, nothing, absolutely nothing, is real. The brocaded silks have been old petticoats; the ebony is lacquer; the ivory is bone; the statuettes are plaster, glazed so as to look like marble; the armour is "pa-

pier-mâché" — even to the owner himself, all is imposition — for he is no other than Albert Jekyl.

Now, my dear reader, you and I see these things precisely in the same light; the illusion of a first glance stripped off, we smile as we examine, one by one, the ingenious devices meant to counterfeit ancient art or modern elegance. It is possible, too, that we derive as much amusement from the ingenuity exercised, as we should have had pleasure in contemplating the realities so typified. Still there is one individual to whom this consciousness brings no alloy of enjoyment — Jekyl has persuaded himself to accept all as fact. Like the Indian, who first carves and then worships his god, he has gone through the whole process of fabrication, and now gazes on his handiwork with the eyes of a true believer. Gracefully reclined upon an ottoman, the mock amber mouthpiece of a gilt hooka between his lips, he dreams, with half-closed eyes, of Oriental luxury! A Sybarite in every taste, he has invented a little philosophy of his own. He has seen enough of life, to know that thousands might live in enjoyment out of the superfluities of rich men, and yet make them nothing the poorer. What banquet would not admit of a guest the more? What *fête* to which another might not be added? What four-in-hand prances by without some vacant seat, be it even in the rumble. What gilded gondola has not a place to spare? To be this "complement" to the world's want is then his mission.

No man invents a "métier," without a strong element of success. The very creative power is an earnest of victory. It is true that there had been great men before Agamemnon; so had there been a

race of "diners-out" before Jekyl; but he first reduced the practice to system; showing that all the triumphs of cookery, all the splendour of equipage, all the blandishments of beauty, all the fascinations of high society, may be enjoyed by one who actually does not hold a "share in the Company," and, without the qualification of scrip, takes his place among the Directors.

Had he brought to this new profession commonplace abilities and inferior acquirements, he would have been lost amid that vulgar herd of indistinguishables which infest every city, and whose names are not even "writ in water." Jekyl, however, possessed many and varied gifts. He might have made a popular preacher in a watering-place; a very successful doctor for nervous invalids; a clever practitioner at the bar; an admirable member of the newspaper press. He might have been very good as an actor; he would have been glorious as an auctioneer! With qualities of this order, a most plastic wit, and an India-rubber conscience; what bound need there be to his success! Nor was there. He was in all the society of the capital; not alone an admitted and accepted, but a welcome guest. He might have failed to strike this man as being clever, or that, as being agreeable. Some might be disappointed in his smartness; some, might think his social claims overrated; none, were ever offended by anything that fell from him. His great secret seemed to lie in the fact, that, if generally easy to be found when required, he was never in the way when not wanted. Had he possessed the gift of invisibility, he could scarcely have been more successful in this latter good quality. He never interrupted a con-

fidence; never marred a *tête-à-tête;* a kind of instinct would arrest his steps as he approached a boudoir, where his presence would be undesirable; and he has been known to retire from a door on which he had already placed his hand, with a sudden burst of intelligence suggesting to "come another day."

These, however, seem mere negative qualities; his positives ones were, however, not less remarkable. The faculties which some men might have devoted to abstract science or metaphysical inquiry, he, with a keen perception of his own fitness, resolved to exercise upon the world around him. His botany was a human classification, all his chemistry an analysis of men's motives. It is true, perhaps, that the poet's line may have been received by him with a peculiar limitation, and that if, "The proper study of mankind, is man," his investigations took a shape scarcely contemplated by the writer. It was not man in his freedom of thought and action, not man in all the consciousness of power, and in the high hope of a great destiny that attracted him — No! it was for small humanity that he cared — for all the struggles, and wiles, and plots, and schemings of this wicked world — for man amid its pomps and vanities, its balls, its festivals, its intrigues, and its calamities.

He felt, with the great dramatist, that "All the world's a stage," and, the better to enjoy the performance, he merely took a "walking character," that gave him full leisure to watch the others. Such was our friend Albert Jekyl, or, as he was popularly called by his acquaintance, Le Duc de Dine-out, to distinguish him from the Talleyrands, who are Ducs de Dino.

Let us now, without further speculation, come back to him, as, with his window open to admit the "Arno sun," he lay at full length upon his ottoman, conning over his dinner-list. He had been for some time absent from Florence, and in the interval a number of new people had arrived, and some of the old had gone away. He was, therefore, running over the names of the present and the missing, with a speculative thought for the future.

"A bad season, it would seem!" muttered he, as his eye traced rapidly the list of English names, in which none of any distinction figured. "This comes of Carbonari and Illuminati humbug. They frighten John Bull, and he will not come abroad to see a barricade under his window. Great numbers have gone away too, the Scotts, the Carringdons, the Hopleys! — three excellent houses; and those dear Milnwoods, who, so lately 'reconciled to Rome,' as the phrase is, 'took out their piety' in Friday fish-dinners.

"The Russians, too, have left us; the Geroboffskys gone back to their snows again, and expiating their 'liberal tendencies' by a tour in Siberia. The Chaptowitsch, recalled in disgrace for asking one of Louis Philippe's sons to a breakfast! We have got in exchange a few Carlists, half-a-dozen 'Legitimists,' with very stately manners and small fortunes. But a good house to dine at, a good *salon* for a lounge, a pleasant haunt for all seasons and at all hours, what is there? Nothing, absolutely nothing. And what a city this was once — crammed, as it used to be, with dear delightful 'ruined families;' that is, those who left ruin to their creditors at home, to come out and live gloriously abroad. And now I look down my list, and,

except my little Sunday dinner at 'Marescotte's,' and that half-luncheon thing I take at the Villa Pessarole, I really see nothing for the whole week. The Onslows, alone, figure in strong capitals. Let me see, then, how they must be treated. I have already housed them at the Palazzo Mazzarini, and, for some days at least, their time will be filled up with upholsterers, decorators, and such like. Then the campaign will open, and I can but watch eventualities, and there will be no lack of these. The young Guardsman likes play. I must see that Prince Carini does not get hold of him. Miss Onslow has a taste for gothic and stained glass; that, now-a-days, often ends in a love of saints' shinbones, and other relics. My lady is disposed to be a 'fast one;' and, in fact, except the gruff old Doctor, who is a confounded bore, the whole craft is deficient in ballast. But I was forgetting 'the Dalton,' shame on me, for she is very pretty indeed!" He seemed to ruminate and reflect for some minutes, and then said aloud, "Yes, ma belle Catherine, with the aid of Albert Jekyl, with *his* counsel to guide, and *his* head to direct you, there 's no saying what your destiny might not be! It would be, I know well, very hard to convince you of the fact, and possibly were I to try it you 'd be silly enough to fancy me in love with you!" Albert Jekyl in love! The idea was so excellent that he lay back and laughed heartily at it. "And yet," said he, after a pause, "you 'll see this fact aright one of these days. You 'll learn the immense benefit my knowledge would be, when joined to your own beauty. Ay, Kate! but it will be too late, just so, too late; then, like every one else, you 'll have played all your trumps before you begin to learn the game.

"A girl who has caught up every trick of manner, every little tactic of society within a month, and who, at this hour, would stand the scrutiny of the most fastidious eye, is a great prize in the wheel. This aptitude might lead to great things, though, in all probability, it will never conduce save to very little ones!" With this reflection Jekyl arose to begin his toilet, an occupation in which, less from dandyism than pure self-love, he usually prolonged during the whole morning.

It was to him a period of self-examination. He seemed — to use a mercantile figure — to be taking stock of his own capabilities, and investigating his own means of future success. It was an "open day;" that is, he knew not where he should dine, so that his costume, while partaking of all the characteristics of the morning, had yet combined certain little decorative traits that would not be unsuitable, if pressed, to accept an unpremeditated hospitality.

There were very few, indeed, with whom Jekyl would have condescended so to dine, not only from the want of dignity incurred, but that on principle he would have preferred the humblest fare at home to the vulgarity of a pot-luck dinner, which invariably, as he said himself, deranged your digestion, and led to wrong intimacies.

His dress being completed, he looked out along the crowd to see in whose carriage he was to have a seat to the Cascini. More than one inviting gesture motioned him to a place, as equipage after equipage passed on; but although some of those who sought him were high in rank, and others distinguished for beauty and attraction, Jekyl declined the courtesies

with that little wave of the hand so significative in all Italian intercourse. Occasionally, indeed, a bland regretful smile seemed to convey the sorrow the refusal cost him; and once he actually placed his hand over where his heart might be, as though to express a perfect pang of suffering, but still he bided his time.

At last, a very dark visage, surrounded by a whisker of blackest hair, peeped from beneath the head of a very shabby calèche, whose horse and coachman were all of the "seediest;" and Jekyl cried out, "Morlache!" while he made a sign towards the Cascini. The other replied by spreading out his hand horizontally from his mouth, and blowing along the surface — a pantomime meant to express a railroad. Jekyl immediately descended and took his place beside him.

CHAPTER XXI.

A Family Picture.

The fashionable life of a great city has a character of sameness, which defies all attempts at portraiture. Well-bred people, and their amusements, are all constructed so perfectly alike — certain family traits pervading them throughout — that every effort at individualization is certain to be a failure. You may change the *venue*, if you will, from London to Paris, to Vienna, or St. Petersburg, but the issue is always the same; the very same interests are at work, and the same passions exercised hy the self-same kind of people. If such be the rule among the first-rate capitals of Europe, it is very far from being the case in those smaller cities which belong to inferior states, and which, from reasons of health, pleasure, or economy, are the resort of strangers from different parts of the world. In these, society is less disciplined, social rank less defined; conflicting claims and rival nationalities disturb the scene, and there is, so to say, a kind of struggle for pre-eminence, which in better regulated communities is never witnessed. If, as is unquestionably true, such places rarely present the attractions of good society, they offer to the mere observer infinitely more varied and amusing views of life, than he would ever expect to see elsewhere. As in the few days of a revolution, when the "barricades are up," and all hurrying to the conflict, more of national character will be exhibited

than in half a century of tame obedience to the law, so here are displayed, to the sun and the noonday, all those passions and pretensions which rarely see the light in other places.

The great besetting sin of this social state is the taste for NOTORIETY. Everything must contribute to this! Not alone wealth, splendour, rank, and genius, but vice, in all its shapes and forms, must be notorious. "Better be calumniated in all the moods and tenses than untalked of," is the grand axiom. Do something that can be reported of you; good, if you will, — bad, if you must; but do it. If you be not rich enough to astonish by the caprices of your wealth, do something by your wits, or even your whiskers. The colour of a man's gloves has sufficed to make his fortune.

Upon this strange ocean, which, if rarely storm-shaken, was never perfectly tranquil, the Onslows were now launched, as well pleased as people usually are who, from being of third or fourth-rate importance, in their own country, suddenly awake to the fact that they are celebrities, abroad.

The Mazzarini Palace had long been untenanted; its last occupant had been one of the Borghese family, whose princely fortune was still unable to maintain the splendour of a residence fitted only for royalty. To learn, therefore, that a rich "Milordo" had arrived there with the intention of passing his winter, was a piece of news that occupied every tongue in the city. Gossips were questioned about the private history, the Peerage consulted for such facts as were public. Sir Stafford's wealth was actively discussed, and all possible inroads upon it his son's extravagance might have

made, debated and decided on. A minute investigation into their probable reasons for leaving England was also instituted, in which conjectures far more ingenious than true figured prominently. What they were like, — what they said, did, and meant to do, — was the sole table-talk of the capital.

"They 've had their horses out from England," said one; "They 've taken the best box at the Pergola," said another; "They 've engaged Midchekoff's cook," said a third; "They 've been speaking to Gridani about his band," chimed in a fourth; and so on. All their proceedings were watched and followed by that eager vulture-hood which hungers for ortolans, and thirsts for iced champagne.

Nor were the Onslows without offering food for this curious solicitude. From the hour of her arrival, Lady Hester had been deeply engaged, in concert with her grand vizier, Albert Jekyl, in preparations for the coming campaign. An army of upholsterers, decorators, and such like, beset the Palazzo with enormous vans crammed full of wares. Furniture, that had served royal guests, and was even yet in high preservation, was condemned, to give way to newer and more costly decoration; — rich stuffs and hangings, that had been the admiration of many a visitor, were ruthlessly pulled down, to be replaced by even more gorgeous materials; 'till at last it was whispered about, that, except some antique cabinets, the pictures, and a few tables of malachite or marble, little or nothing remained of what once had constituted the splendour of the place.

These were mere rumours, however, for as yet none, save Albert Jekyl himself, had seen the interior; and from him; unless disposed to accord it, all con-

fidence was hopeless. Indeed, his little vague stare when questioned — his simpering, "I shouldn't wonder," "It is very likely," or, "Now that you mention it, I begin to think so too," would have disarmed the suspicion of all who had not studied him deeply. What the Onslows were going to do, and when they would do it, were, then, the vexed questions of every coterie. In a few days more the Carnival would begin, and yet no announcement of their intentions had yet gone forth — no programme of future festivities been issued to the world. A vague and terrible fear began to prevail that it was possible they meant all these splendid preparations for themselves alone. Such a treason was incredible at first; but as day followed day, and no sign was made, suspicion ripened into actual dread; and now, the eager expectants began to whisper among themselves dark reasons for a conduct so strange and inexplicable.

Haggerstone contributed his share to these mysterious doubtings, for while not confessing that his acquaintance with the Onslows was of the very slightest, and dated but from a week before, he spoke of them with all the affected ease and information of one, who had known them for years.

Nor were his comments of the most flattering kind, for seeing how decidedly every effort he made to renew acquaintance was met by a steady opposition, he lost no time in assuming his stand as enemy. The interval of doubt which had occurred as to their probable mode of life was favourable for this line of action. None knew if they were ever to partake of the splendour and magnificence of the Mazzarini; none could guess what chance they had of the sumptuous banquets of

the rich man's table. It was a lottery, in which, as yet, they had not even a ticket, and what so natural as to depreciate the scheme.

If the courts of law and equity be the recognised tribunals by which the rights of property are decided, so there exists in every city certain not less decisive courts, which pronounce upon all questions of social claims, and deliver judgments upon the pretensions of every new arrival amongst them. High amid the number of these was a certain family called Ricketts, who had been residents of Florence for thirty odd years back. They consisted of three persons — General Ricketts, his wife, and a maiden sister of the general. They inhabited a small house in a garden within the boulevard, dignified by the name of the "Villino Zoe." It had originally been the humble residence of a market-gardener, but by the aid of paint and plaster, contrived to impose upon the world almost as successfully as did the fair owner herself by the help of similar adjuncts. A word, however, for the humanities before we speak of their abiding place. The "General" — Heaven alone knew when, where, or in what service he became so — was a small, delicate little man, with bland manners, a weak voice, a weak stomach, and a weaker head; his instincts all mild, gentle, and inoffensive, and his whole pursuit in life a passion for inventing fortifications, and defending passes and *têtes-du-pont* by lines, circumvallations, and ravelins, which cost reams of paper and whole buckets of water-colour to describe. The only fire which burned within his nature was a little flickering flame of hope, that one day the world would awake to the recognition of his great discoveries, and his name be associated with

those of Vauban and Carnot. Sustained by this, he bore up against contemporary neglect and actual indifference; he whispered to himself, that, like Nelson, he would one day "have a gazette of his own," and in this firm conviction, he went on with rule and compass, measuring and daubing and drawing from morn till night, happy, humble, and contented: nothing could possibly be more inoffensive than such an existence. Even the French — our natural enemies, — or the Russians — our Palmerstonian "Bêtes Noires," — would have forgiven, had they but seen, the devices of his patriotism. Never did heroic ardour burn in a milder bosom, for though his brain revelled in all the horrors of siege and slaughter, he would not have had the heart to crush a beetle.

Unlike him in every respect was the partner of his joys: a more bustling, plotting, scheming existence it was hard to conceive. Most pretenders are satisfied with aspiring to one crown; *her* ambitions were "legion." When Columbus received the taunts of the courtiers on the ease of his discovery, and merely replied, that the merit lay simply in the fact that he alone had made it, he was uttering a truth susceptible of very wide application. Nine-tenths of the inventions which promote the happiness or secure the ease of mankind, have been not a whit more difficult than that of balancing the egg. They only needed that some one should think of them, "practically." Thousands may have done so in moods of speculation or fancy; the grand requisite was a practical intelligence. Such was Mrs. Rickets'. As she had seen at Naples the lava used for mere road-making, which in other hands, and by other treatment, might have been

fashioned into all the shapes and colours of Bohemian glass, so did she perceive that a certain raw material was equally misapplied and devoted to base uses, but which, by the touch of genius, might be made powerful as the wand of an enchanter. This was "Flattery." Do not, like the Spanish courtiers, my dear reader — do not smile at her discovery, nor suppose that she had been merely exploring an old and exhausted mine. Her flattery was not, as the world employs it, an exaggerated estimate of existing qualities, but a grand poetic and creative power, that actually begot the great sublime it praised. Whatever your walk, rank, or condition in life, she instantly laid hold of it to entrap you. No matter what your size, stature, or symmetry, she could costume you in a minute! Her praises, like an elastic-web livery, fitted all her slaves; and slaves were they of the most abject slavery, who were led by the dictation of her crafty intelligence!

A word about poor Martha, and we have done; nor, indeed, is there any need we should say more than that she was universally known as "Poor Martha" by all their acquaintance. Oh! what patience, submission, and long-suffering it takes before the world will confer its degree of Martyr — before they will condescend to visit, even with so cheap a thing as compassion, the life of an enduring self-devotion. Martha had had but one idol all her life — her brother; and although, when he married late in years, she had almost died broken-hearted at the shock, she clung to him and his fortunes, unable to separate from one, to whose habits she had been ministering for above thirty years. It was said that originally she was a person of good common faculties, and a reasonably fair knowledge

of the world; but to see her at the time of which we now speak, not a vestige remained of either — not a stone marked where the edifice once stood. Nor can this be matter of wonderment. Who could have passed years amid all the phantasmagoria of that unreal existence, and either not gone clean mad, or made a weak compromise with sanity, by accepting everything as real. Poor Martha had exactly these two alternatives — either to "believe the crusts, mutton," or be eternally shut out from all hope. Who can tell the long and terrible struggle such a mind must have endured? — what little bursts of honest energy repelled by fear and timidity? — what good intentions baffled by natural humility, and the affection she bore her brother?

It may have, nay, it did, cost her much, to believe this strange creed of her sister-in-law; but she ended by doing so. So implicit was her faith, that, like a true devotee, she would not trust the evidence of her own senses, if opposed by the articles of her belief. The very pictures, at whose purchase she had been present, and whose restoration and relackering had been the work of her own hands, she was willing to aver had been the gifts of royal and princely personages. The books for which she had herself written to the publishers, she would swear were of tributes offered by the respective writers to the throne of taste and erudition. Every object with whose humble birth and origin she was familiar, was associated in her mind with some curious history, which, got off by rote, she repeated with full credulity. Like the well-known athlete, who lifted a bull because he had accustomed himself to the feat since the animal had been a calf,

rising from small beginnings, she had so educated her faculties, that now nothing was above her powers. Not all the straits and contrivances by which this motley display was got up — not all the previous schemings and plottings — not all the discussions as to what King or Kaiser this should be attributed — by what artist that was painted — who carved this cup — who enamelled that vase — could shake the firmness of her faith when the matter was once decided. She might oppose the Bill in every stage; she might cavil at it, in Committee; and divide on every clause; but when it once became law, she revered it as a statute of the land. All her own doubts faded away on the instant; all her former suggestions vanished at once; a new light seemed to break on her mind, and she appeared to see with the eyes of truth and discernment. We have been led away beyond our intention in this sketch, and have no space to devote to that temple wherein the mysteries were celebrated. Enough if we say that it was small and ill-arranged, its discomfort increased by the incongruous collection of rare and curious objects by which it was filled. Stuffed lions stood in the hall; mock men in armour guarded the entrance to the library; vast glass cases of mineralogical wealth, botanical specimens, stuffed birds, impaled butterflies, Indian weapons, Etrurian cups, Irish antiquities, Chinese curiosities, covered the walls on every side. Not a specimen amongst them that could not trace its presentation to some illustrious donor. Miniatures of dear, dear friends were everywhere; and what a catholic friendship was that which included every one, from Lord Byron to Chalmers, and took in the whole range of morals, from Mrs. Opie to Fanny Elssler. Indeed,

although the fair Zoe was a "rigid virtue," her love of genius, her "mind-worship," as she called it, often led her into strange intimacies with that intellectual class whose strength lies in pirouettes, and whose gifts are short petticoats. In a word, whatever was "notorious" was her natural prey: a great painter, a great radical, a great basso, a great traveller; any one to lionise, anything to hang a history upon; to enlist, even "for one night only," in that absurd comedy which was performed at her house, and to display among her acquaintances as another in that long catalogue of those who came to lay the tribute of their genius at her feet.

That a large section of society was disposed to be rude and ungenerous enough to think her a bore, is a fact that we are, however unwilling, obliged to confess; but her actual influence was little affected by the fact. The real serious business of life is often carried on in localities surrounded by innumerable inconveniences. Men buy and sell their millions, subsidise states, and raise loans, in dens dark and dismal enough to be prison-cells. In the same way, the Villino was a recognised rendezvous of all who wanted to hear what was going on in the world, and who wished to be *à la hauteur* of every current scandal of the day. Not that such was ever the tone of the conversation; on the contrary, it was "all taste and the musical glasses," the "naughty talk" being the mere asides of the scene.

Now, in that season of foreign life which precedes the Carnival, and on those nights when there is no opera, any one benevolent enough to open his doors to receive is sure of full houses; so the Villino "improved the occasion," by announcing a series of Tues-

days and Fridays, which were, as the papers say, frequented by all the rank and fashion of the metropolis. It is at one of these "at homes" that we would now present our reader — not, indeed, during the full moon of the reception, when the crowded rooms, suffocating with heat, were crammed with visitors, talking in every tongue of Europe, and every imaginabe dialect of each, The great *mêlée* tournament was over, and a few merely lingered over the now empty lists, discussing in familiar converse the departed guests and the events of the evening.

This privy council consisted of the reader's old acquaintance, Haggerstone, a Russo-Polish Count Petrolaffski, a dark, sallow-skinned, odd-looking gentleman, whose national predilections had raised him to the rank of an enemy to the Emperor, but whose private resources, it was rumoured, came from the Imperial treasury, to reward his services as a spy; a certain Mr. Scroope Purvis, the brother of Mrs. Ricketts, completing the party. He was a little rosy-cheeked old man, with a limp and a stutter, perpetually running about, retailing gossip, which, by some accident or other, he invariably got all wrong, never, on even the most trifling occasion, being able to record a fact as it occurred.

Such were the individuals of a group which sat around the fire in close and secret confab, Mrs. Ricketts herself placed in the midst, her fair proportions gracefully disposed in a chair whose embroidery displayed all the quarterings and emblazonment of her family for centuries back. The "Bill" before the house was the Onslows', whose *res gestæ* were causing a most intense interest everywhere.

"Have dey return your call, Madam?" asked the

Pole, with an almost imperceptible glance beneath his dark brows.

"Not yet, Count; we only left our cards yesterday." This, be it said in parenthesis, was "inexact" — the visit had been made eight days before. "Nor should we have gone at all, but Lady Foxington begged and entreated we would. 'They will be so utterly without guidance of any kind,' she said; 'you must really take them in hand.'"

"And you will take dem in your hand — eh?"

"That depends, my dear Count — that depends," said she, pondering. "We must see what line they adopt here; rank and wealth have no influence with us if ununited with moral and intellectual excellence."

"I take it, then, your circle will be more select than amusing, this winter," said Haggerstone, with one of his whip-cracking enunciations.

"Be it so, Colonel," sighed she, plaintively, "Like a lone beacon on a rock, with — I forget the quotation."

"With the phos-phos-phos-phate of lime upon it?" said Purvis, "that new discov-co-covery?"

"With no such thing! A figure is, I perceive, a dangerous mode of expression."

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried he, with a peculiar cackle, whose hysteric notes always carried himself into the seventh heaven of enjoyment, "you would cut a pretty figure if you were to be made a beacon of, and be burned like Moses. Ha! ha! ha!"

The lady turned from him in disdain, and addressed the Colonel.

"So you really think that they are embarrassed, and that is the true reason of their coming abroad."

"I believe I may say, I know it, Ma'am!" rejoined he. "There is a kind of connexion between our families, although I should be very sorry they 'd hear of it — the Badelys and Harringtons are first cousins."

"Oh, to be sure!" broke in Purvis. "Jane Harrington was father; no, no, not father — she was mo-mo-mother of Tom Badely; no! that isn't it, she was his aunt, or his brother-in-law, I forget which."

"Pray be good enough, Sir, not to involve a respectable family in a breach of the common law," said Haggerstone, tartly, "and leave the explanation to me."

"How I do dislike dat English habit of countin' cousins," said the Pole; "you never see tree, four English togeder widout a leetle tree of genealogie in de middle, and dey do sit all round, fighting for de fruit."

"Financial reasons, then, might dictate retirement," said Mrs. Ricketts, coming back to the original theme.

A very significant nod from Haggerstone inferred that he concurred in the remark

"Four contested elections for a county, Ma'am, a spendthrift wife, and a gambling son, rarely increase a man's income," said he, sententiously.

"Do he play? What for play is he fond of?" asked the Pole, eagerly.

"Play, Sir? There is nothing an Englishman will not play at — from the turf, to tossing for sovereigns."

"So *Hamlet* say, in Shakespeare, 'de play is de ting,'" cried the Count, with the air of a man who made a happy quotation.

"They are going to have plays," broke in Purvis; "Jekyl let it out to-night. They 're to get up a Vau-vau-vau-vau —"

"A *tête de veau*, probably, Sir," said Haggerstone; "in which case," continued he, in a whisper, "you would be invaluable."

"No, it isn't that," broke in Purvis; "they are to have what they call Pro-verbs."

"I trust they have engaged your services as *Solomon*, Sir," said Haggerstone, with that look of satisfaction which always followed an impudent speech.

"I heard the subject of one of them," resumed the other, who was far too occupied with his theme to bestow a thought upon a sarcasm. "There's a lady in love with — with — with her Mam-mam-mam —"

"Her Mamma," suggested the Pole.

"No, it isn't her Mamma; it 's her Mam-ame-ameluke — her Mameluke slave; and he, who is a native prince, with a great many wives of his own —"

"Oh, for shame, Scroope, you forget Martha is here," said Mrs. Ricketts, who was always ready to suppress the bore by a call to order on the score of morals.

"It isn't wrong, I assure you; just hear me out; let me only explain —"

"There, pray don't insist, I beg you," said Mrs. Ricketts, with a regal wave of her hand.

"Why, it 's Miss Dalton is to play it, Jekyl says," cried Purvis, in a tone of most imploring cadence.

"And who may Miss Dalton be?" asked Mrs. Ricketts.

"She 's the niece — no, she 's the aunt, — or rather her father is aunt to — to —"

"He may be an old lady, Sir; but, surely —"

"Oh, I have it now!" broke in Purvis. "It was her mother; Miss Da-a-alton's mother was uncle to a Stafford."

"Perhaps I can shorten the pedigree," said Haggerstone, tartly. "The young lady is the daughter of a man whom this same Sir Stafford tricked out of his fortune; they were distant relatives, so he hadn't even the plea of blood-relationship to cover his iniquity. It was, however, an Irish fortune, and, like a Spanish château, its loss is more a question of feeling than of fact. The lawyers still say that Dalton's right is unimpeachable, and that the Onslows have not even the shadow of a case for a jury.

"An' have de lady no broder nor sister?" asked the Count, who had heard this story with much attention.

"She has, Sir, both brother and sister, but both illegitimate, so that this girl is the heiress to the estate."

"And probably destined to be the wife of the young Guardsman," said Mrs. Ricketts.

"Guessed with your habitual perspicuity, Madam," said Haggerstone, bowing.

"How very shocking! What worldliness one sees everywhere!" cried she, plaintively.

"The world is excessively worldly, Madam," rejoined Haggerstone; "but I really believe that we are not a jot worse than were the Patriarchs of old."

"Ah, oui, les Patriarches!" echoed the Pole, laughing, and always ready to seize upon an allusion that savoured of irreverence.

"Count! — Colonel Haggerstone!" cried Mrs.

Ricketts, in reproof, and with a look to where Martha sat at her embroidery-frame. "And this Miss Dalton — is she pretty?"

"She is pretty at this moment, Madam; but, with a clever hairdresser and a good milliner, would be downright beautiful. Of course these are adjuncts she is little likely to find during her sojourn with the Onslows."

"Poor thing! how glad one would be to offer her a kinder asylum," said Mrs. Ricketts, while she threw her eyes over the cracked china monsters and mock Vandykes around her; "a home," added she, "where intellectuality and refinement might compensate for the vulgar pleasures of mere wealth!"

"She may want such, one of these days yet, or I'm much mistaken," said Haggerstone. "Onslow has got himself very deep in railway speculations; he has heavy liabilities in some Mexican mining affairs too. They 've all been living very fast; and a crash — a real 'crash'" — this word he gave with a force of utterance that only malignity could compass — "is almost certain to follow. What an excellent stable will come to the hammer then! There 's a 'Boneseter' colt worth a thousand guineas, with his engagements."

And now there was a little pause in the dialogue, while each followed out the thoughts of his own mind. Haggerstone's were upon the admirable opportunity of picking up a first-rate batch of horses for a fourth of their value; Mrs. Ricketts was pondering over the good policy of securing possession of a rich heiress as a member of her family, to be held in bondage as long as possible, and eventually — if it must be — given

in marriage to some unprovided-for cousin; the Pole's dreams were of a rich wife; and Purvis, less ambitious than the rest, merely revelled in the thought of all the gossip this great event, when it should come off, would afford him; the innumerable anecdotes he would have to retail of the family and their wastefulness; the tea-parties he should enliven by his narratives; the soirées he would amuse with his sallies. Blessed gift of imbecility! how infinitely more pleasurable to its possessor than all the qualities and attributes of genius!

"Dat is ver pretty, indeed, très jolie!" said the Count, bestowing a look of approval at the embroidery-frame, whereupon, for eight mortal months, poor Martha laboured at the emblazonment of the Ricketts' arms; "de leetle dogs are as de life."

"They are tigers, Monsieur le Comte," replied she, modestly.

"Oh, pardon! dey are 'tigres!'"

"Most puppies are somewhat tigerish now-a-days," chimed in Haggerstone, rising to take his leave.

"You are leaving us early, Colonel," said the old General, as he awoke from a long nap on the little corner sofa, which formed his resting-place.

"It is past two, Sir; and, even in *your* society, one cannot cheat time." Then, having acquitted himself of his debt of impertinence, he wished them good night. The others, also, took their leave and departed.

CHAPTER XXII.

Kate.

Let us now return to Kate Dalton, whose life, since we last saw her, had been one round of brilliant enjoyment. To the pleasure of the journey, with all its varied objects of interest, the picturesque scenery of the Via Mala, the desolate grandeur of the Splugen, the calm and tranquil beauty of Como, succeeded the thousand treasures of art in the great cities where they halted. At first every image and object seemed associated by some invisible link with thoughts of home. What would Nelly think or say of this? was the ever-recurring question of her mind. How should she ever be able to treasure up her own memories and tell of the wonderful things that every moment met her eyes? The quick succession of objects all new and dazzling, were but so many wonders to bring back to that "dear fireside" of home. The Onslows themselves, who saw everything without enthusiasm of any kind, appeared to take pleasure in the freshness of the young girl's admiration. It gave them, as it were, a kind of reflected pleasure, while, amid galleries and collections of all that was rare and curious, nothing struck them as half so surprising as the boundless delight of her unhackneyed nature.

Educated to a certain extent, by watching the pursuits of her sister, Kate knew how to observe with taste, and admire with discrimination. Beauty of a

high order would seem frequently endowed with a power of appreciating the beauty of art — a species of relation appearing almost to subsist between the two.

Gifted with this instinct, there was an intensity in all her enjoyments, which displayed itself in the animation of her manner, and the elevated expression of her features. The coldest and most worldly natures are seldom able to resist the influence of this enthusiasm; however hard the metal of their hearts, they must melt beneath this flame. Lady Hester Onslow, herself, could not remain insensible to the pure sincerity and generous warmth of this artless girl. For a time the combat, silent, unseen, but eventful, was maintained between these two opposite natures, the principle of good warring with the instincts of evil. The victory might have rested with the true cause — there was every prospect of its doing so — when Sydney Onslow, all whose sympathies were with Kate, and whose alliance had every charm of sisterhood, was suddenly recalled to England by tidings of her Aunt's illness. Educated by her Aunt Conway, she had always looked up to her as a mother, nor did the unhappy circumstances of her father's second marriage tend to weaken this feeling of attachment. The sad news reached them at Genoa; and Sydney, accompanied by Doctor Grounsell, at once set out for London. If the sudden separation of the two girls, just at the very moment of a budding friendship, was sorrowfully felt by both, to Lady Hester the event was anything but unwelcome.

She never had liked Sydney; she now detested the notion of a step-daughter, almost of her own age, in the same society with herself: she dreaded, besides,

the influence that she had already acquired over Kate, whose whole heart and nature she had resolved on monopolising. It was not from any feeling of attachment or affection, it was the pure, miserlike desire for possession, that animated her. The plan of carrying away Kate from her friends and home had been her own; *she*, therefore, owned her; the original title was vested in her; the young girl's whole future was to be in her hands; her "road in life" was to be at *her* dictation. To be free of Sydney, and the odious Doctor, by the same event, was a double happiness, which, in spite of all the decorous restraints bad news impose, actually displayed itself in the most palpable form.

The Palazzo Mazzarini was now to be opened to the world, with all the splendour wealth could bestow, untrammelled by any restriction, the taste of Sydney or the prudence of the Doctor might impose. Sir Stafford, ever ready to purchase quiet for himself at any cost of money, objected to nothing. The cheapness of Italy, the expectations formed of an Englishman, were the arguments which always silenced him if he ventured on the very mildest remonstrance about expenditure: and Jekyl was immediately called into the witness-box, to show that among the economies of the Continent, nothing was so striking as the facilities of entertaining. George, as might be supposed, had no dislike to see their own house the great centre of society, and himself the much sought-after and caressed youth of the capital.

As for Kate, pleasure came associated in her mind with all that could elevate and exalt it, — refinement of manners, taste, luxury, the fascinations of wit, the glitter of conversational brilliancy. She had long

known that she was handsome, but she had never felt it till now; never awoke to that thrilling emotion, which whispers of power over others, and which elevates the possessor of a great quality into a species of petty sovereignty above their fellows. Her progress in this conviction was a good deal aided by her maid; for, at Jekyl's suggestion, a certain Mademoiselle Nina had been attached to her personal staff.

It was not easy at first for Kate to believe in the fact at all, that she should have a peculiar attendant; nor was it without much constraint and confusion that she could accept of services from one whose whole air and bearing bore the stamp of breeding and tact. Mademoiselle Nina had been the maid of the Princess Menzikoff, the most distinguished belle of Florence, the model of taste and elegance in dress; but when the Princess separated from her husband, some unexplained circumstances had involved the name of the femme-de-chambre, so that, instead of "exchanging without a difference," as a person of her great abilities might readily have done, she had disappeared for a while from the scene and sphere in which habitually she moved, and only emerged from her seclusion to accept the humble position of Kate Dalton's maid. She was a perfect type of her own countrywomen in her own class of life. Small and neatly formed, her head was too large for her size, and the forehead over-large for the face, the brows and temples being developed beyond all proportion; her eyes, jet black and deeply set, were cold, stern-looking, and sleepy, sadness, or rather weariness, being the characteristic expression of the face. Her mouth, however, when she smiled, relieved this, and gave a look of softness to her features.

Her manner was that of great distancè and respect — the trained observance of one who had been always held in the firm hand of discipline, and never suffered to assume the slightest approach to a liberty. She contrived, however, even in her silence, or in the very few words she ever uttered, to throw an air of devotion into her service that took away from the formality of a manner that at first seemed cold, and even repulsive. Kate, indeed, in the beginning, was thrown back by the studied reserve and deferential distance she observed; but as days went over, and she grew more accustomed to the girl's manner, she began to feel pleased with the placid and unchanging demeanour, that seemed to bespeak a mind admirably trained and regulated to its own round of duties.

While Kate sat at a writing-table adding a few lines to that letter which, began more than a week ago, was still far from being completed, Nina, whose place was beside the window, worked away with bent down head, not seeming to have a thought, save for the occupation before her. Not so Kate; fancies came and went at every instant, breaking in upon the tenor of her thoughts, or wending far away on errands of speculation. Now, she would turn her eye from the page, to gaze in wondering delight at the tasteful decorations of her little chamber — a perfect gem of elegance in all its details; then, she would start up to step out upon the terrace, where even in winter the orange-trees were standing, shedding their sweet odour at every breeze from the Arno; with what rapturous delight she would follow the windings of that bright river, till it was lost in the dark woods of the Cascini! How the sounds of passing equipages, the glitter and

display of the moving throng, stirred her heart, and then, as she turned back within the room, with what a thrill of ecstasy her eyes rested on the splendid ball-dress which Nina had just laid upon the sofa! With a trembling hand she touched the delicate tissue of Brussels lace, and placed it over her arm in a graceful fold, her cheek flushing, and her chest heaving in consciousness of heightening beauty.

Nina's head was never raised, her nimble fingers never ceased to ply, but beneath her dark brows, her darker eyes shot forth a glance of deep and subtle meaning, as she watched the young girl's gesture.

"Nina," cried she at last, "it is much too handsome for me; although I love to look at it I actually fear to wear it. You know I never have worn anything like this before."

"Mademoiselle is too diffident and too unjust to her own charms; beautiful as is the robe it only suits the elegance of its wearer."

"One ought to be so graceful in every gesture, so perfect in every movement beneath folds like these," cried Kate, still gazing at the fine tracery.

"Mademoiselle is grace itself!" said she, in a low soft voice, so quiet in its utterance, that it sounded like a reflection uttered unconsciously.

"Oh, Nina! if I were so. If I only could feel that my every look and movement were not recalling the peasant girl; for, after all, I have been little better — our good blood could not protect us from being poor, and poverty means so much that lowers!"

Nina sighed, but so softly as to be inaudible, and Kate went on.

"My sister, Nelly, never thought so; she always

felt differently. Oh! Nina, how you would love her if you saw her, and how you would admire her beautiful hair, and those deep blue eyes, so soft, so calm, and yet so meaning."

Nina looked up, and seemed to give a glance that implied assent.

"Nelly would be so happy here, wandering through these galleries and sitting for hours long in those beautiful churches, surrounded with all that can elevate feeling or warm imagination; she, too, would know how to profit by these treasures of art. The frivolous enjoyments that please me would be beneath her; perhaps, she would teach me better things; perhaps I might turn from mere sensual pleasure, to higher and purer sources of happiness."

"Will Mademoiselle permit me to try this wreath?" said Nina, advancing with a garland of white roses, which she gracefully placed around Kate's head.

A half cry of delight burst from Kate as she saw the effect in the glass.

"Beautiful, indeed!" said Nina, as though in concurrence, with an unspoken emotion.

"But, Nina, I scarcely like this — it seems as though — I cannot tell what I wish — as though I would desire notice — I, that am nothing — that ought to pass unobserved."

"You, Mademoiselle," cried Nina, and for the first time a slight warmth colouring the tone of her manner; "you, Mademoiselle — the belle, the beauty, the acknowledged beauty of Florence."

"Nina! Nina!" cried Kate, rebukingly.

"I hope Mademoiselle will forgive me. I would not for the world fail in my respect," said Nina, with

deep humility; "but I was only repeating what others spoke."

"I am not angry, Nina — at least, not with you," said Kate, hurriedly. "With myself, indeed, I 'm scarcely quite pleased. But who could have said such a silly thing?"

"Every one, Mademoiselle; every one, as they were standing beneath the terrace t'other evening. I overheard Count Labinski say it to Captain Onslow; and then my Lady took it up, and said, 'You are quite right, gentlemen; there is nothing that approaches her in beauty.'"

"Nina! dear Nina!" said Kate, covering her flushed face with both hands.

"The Count de Melzi was more enthusiastic than even the rest. He vowed that he had grown out of temper with his Raffaelles since he saw you."

A hearty burst of laughter from Kate, told that this flattery, at least, had gone too far. And now she resumed her seat at the writing-table. It was of the Splugen Pass and Como she had been writing; of the first burst of Italy upon the senses, as, crossing the High Alps, the land of the terraced vine lay stretched beneath. She tried to fall back upon the memory of that glorious scene, as it broke upon her; but it was in vain. Other and far different thoughts had gained the mastery. It was no longer the calm lake, on whose mirrored surface snow-peaks and glaciers were reflected, — it was not of those crags, over which the wild-fig and the olive, the oleander and the mimosa, are spreading, she could think. Other images crowded to her brain; troops of admirers were before her fancy; the hum of adulation filled her ears; splendid *salons*,

resounding with delicious music, and a-blaze with a thousand wax lights, rose before her imagination, and her heart swelled with conscious triumph. The transition was most abrupt, then, from a description of scenery and natural objects to a narrative of the actual life of Florence: —

"Up to this, Nelly, we have seen no one, except Mr. Jekyl, whom you will remember as having met at Baden. He dines here several days every week, and is most amusing with his funny anecdotes and imitations, for he knows everybody, and is a wonderful mimic. You 'd swear Doctor Grounsell was in the next room if you heard Mr. Jekyl's imitation. There has been some difficulty about an opera-box, for Mr. Jekyl, who manages everybody, will insist upon having Prince Midchekoff's, which is better than the royal box, and has not succeeded. For this reason we have not yet been to the Opera; and, as the Palace has been undergoing a total change of decoration and furniture, there has been no reception here as yet; but on Tuesday we are to give our first ball. All that I could tell you of splendour, my dearest Nelly, would be nothing to the reality of what I see here. Such magnificence in every detail; such troops of servants, all so respectful and obliging, and some dressed in liveries that resemble handsome uniforms! Such gold and silver plate; such delicious flowers everywhere — on the staircase, in the drawing-room — here, actually, beside me as I write. And, oh! Nelly, if you could see my dress! Lace, with bouquets of red camelia, and looped up with strings of small pearls. Think of *me*, of poor Kate Dalton, wearing such splendour! And, strange enough, too, I do not

feel awkward in it. My hair, that you used to think I dressed so well myself, has been pronounced a perfect horror; and although I own, it did shock me at first to hear it, I now see that they were perfectly right. Instead of bands, I wear ringlets down to my very shoulders; and Nina tells me there never was such an improvement, as the character of my features requires softening. Such quantities of dress as I have got, too! for there is endless toilette here; and although I 'm now growing accustomed to it, at first it worried me dreadfully, and left me no time to read. And, *à propos* of reading, Lady Hester has given me such a strange book. 'Mathilde,' it is called — very clever, deeply interesting, but not the kind of reading you would like; at least, neither the scenes nor the characters such as you would care for. Of course I take it to be a good picture of life in another sphere from what I have seen myself; and if it be, I must say there is more vice in high society than I believed. One trait of manners, however, I cannot help admiring: the extreme care that every one takes never to give even the slightest offence; not only that the wrong thing is never said, but never even suggested; such an excessive deference to others' feelings bespeaks great refinement, if not a higher and better quality. Lady Hester is delightful in this respect. I cannot tell you how the charm of her manner grows into a fascination. Captain Onslow I see little of, but he is always good-humoured and gay; and as for Sir Stafford, he is like a father in the kindliness and affection of his cordiality. Sydney I miss greatly; she was nearly of my own age, and although so much superior to me in every way, so companion-

able and sister-like. We are to write to each other if she does not return soon. I intended to have said so much about the galleries, but Mr. Jekyl does quiz so dreadfully about artistic enthusiasm, I am actually ashamed to say a word; besides, to me, Nelly, beautiful pictures impart pleasure less from intrinsic merit, than from the choice of subject and the train of thoughts they originate; and for this reason I prefer Salvator Rosa to all other painters. The romantic character of his scenery, the kind of story that seems to surround his characters, the solemn tranquillity of his moonlights, the mellow splendour of his sunsets, actually heighten one's enjoyment of the realities in nature. I am ashamed to own that Raffaelle is less my favourite than Titian, whose portraits appear to reveal the whole character and life of the individual represented. In Velasquez there is another feature —" Here came an interruption, for Nina came with gloves to choose, and now arose the difficult decision between a fringe of silver filagree and a deep fall of Valenciennes lace, a question, on both sides of which, Mademoiselle Nina had much to say. In all these little discussions, the mock importance lent to mere trifles at first amused Kate, and even provoked her laughter; but, by degrees, she learned, not only to listen to them with attention, but even to take her share in the consultation. Nina's great art lay in her capacity for adapting a costume to the peculiar style and character of the wearer, and, however exaggerated were some of her notions on this subject, there was always a sufficiency of shrewd sense and good taste in her remarks to overbear any absurdity in her theory. Kate Dalton, whose whole nature had been simplicity and frankness

itself, was gradually brought to assume a character with every change of toilette; for if she came down to breakfast in a simple robe of muslin, she changed it for a "costume de paysanne" to walk in the garden; and this again for a species of hunting-dress to ride in the Cascini — to appear afterwards at dinner in some new type of a past age. An endless variety of these devices at last engaging attention, and occupying time, to the utter exclusion of topics more important and interesting.

The letter was now to be resumed; but the clue was lost, and her mind was only fettered with topics of dress and toilette. She walked out upon the terrace to recover her composure; but beneath the window was rolling on that endless tide of people and carriages, that swells up the great flood of a capital city. She turned her steps to another side, and there, in the pleasure-ground, was George Onslow, with a great horse-sheet round him, accustoming a newly-purchased Arabian to the flapping of a riding-skirt. It was a present Sir Stafford had made her the day before. Everything she saw — everything she heard, recalled but one image — herself! The intoxication of this thought was intense. Life assumed features of delight and pleasure she had never conceived possible before. There was an interest imparted to everything, since in everything she had her share. Oh! most insidious of all poisons is that of egotism, which lulls the conscience by the soft flattery we whisper to ourselves, making us to believe that we are such as the world affects to think us. How ready are we to take credit for gifts that have been merely lent us by a kind of courtesy, and of which we must make res-

titution when called upon, with what appetite we may.

For the time, indeed, the ecstasy of this delusion is boundless! Who has not, at some one moment or other of his life, experienced the entrancing delight of thinking that the world is full of his friends and admirers, that good wishes follow him as he goes, and kind welcomes await his coming? Much of our character for good or evil, of our subsequent utility in life, or our utter helplessness, will depend upon how we stand the season of trial. Kate Dalton possessed much to encourage this credulity; she was not only eminently handsome, but she had that species of fascination in her air, which a clever French writer defines as the feminine essence, "plus femme que les autres femmes." If a very critical eye might have detected in her manner and address certain little awkwardnesses, a less exacting judgment would have probably been struck with them as attractions, recalling the fact of her youth, her simplicity, and the freshness of her nature. Above all other charms, however, was the radiant happiness that beamed out in every word, and look, and gesture; such a thorough sense of enjoyment — so intense a pleasure in life — is among the very rarest of all gifts.

There was enough of singularity, of the adventurous, in the nature of her position to excel all the romance of her nature; there was more than enough of real splendour around her to give an air of fact and truth, to the highest flights of her imagination. Had she been the sole daughter of the house and name, flatteries and caresses could not have been lavished on her more profusely — her will consulted — her wishes

inquired — her taste evoked on every occasion. And yet with all these seductions about her she was not yet spoiled — not yet! Home and its dear associations were ever present to her mind; her humble fortune, and that simple life she used to lead, enforcing lessons of humility not yet distasteful. She could still recur to the memory of the little window that looked over the "Murg," and think the scenery beautiful. Her dear, dear papa was still all she had ever thought him. Nelly was yet the sweet-tempered, gentle, gifted creature she worshipped as a sister; even Hanserl was the kind, quaint emblem of his own dreamy "Vaterland." As yet no conflict had arisen between the past and the present — between the remembrance of narrow fortune and all its crippling exigencies, and the enjoyment of wealth, that seems to expand the generous feelings of the heart. The lustre of her present existence threw, as yet, no sickly light over the bygone — would it might have been always so!

CHAPTER XXIII.

A Small Supper Party.

The great ball at the Mazzarini Palace "came off" just as other great balls have done, and will continue to do, doubtless, for ages hence. There was the usual, perhaps a little more than the usual, splendour of dress and diamonds — the same glare, and crash, and glitter, and crowd, and heat; the same buoyant light-heartedness among the young; the same corroding *ennui* of the old; taste in dress was criticised — looks were scanned — flirtations detected — quarrels discovered — fans were mislaid — hearts were lost — flounces were torn, and feelings hurt. There was the ordinary measure of what people called enjoyment, mixed up with the ordinary proportion of envy, shyness, pretension, sarcasm, coldness, and malice. It was a grand tournament of human passions, in white satin and jewels; and if the wounds exchanged were not as rudely administered, they were to the full as dangerous as in the real lists of combat. Yet, in this mortal conflict, all seemed happy; there was an air of voluptuous abandonment over everything; and whatever cares they might have carried within, as far as appearance went, the world went well and pleasantly with them. The ball was, however, a splendid one: there was everything that could make it such. The *salons* were magnificent in decoration — the lighting a perfect blaze. There was beauty in abundance — diamonds in masses

— and a Royal Highness from the Court, an insignificant little man, it is true, with a star and a stutter, who stared at every one, and spoke to nobody. Still he was the centre of a glittering group of handsome aides-de-camp, who displayed their fascinations in every gesture and look.

Apart from the great flood-tide of pleasure — down which so many float buoyantly — there is ever on these occasions a deeper current that flows beneath, of human wile, and cunning, and strategy, just as, in many a German fairy tale, some curious and recondite philosophy lies hid beneath the little incidents related to amuse childhood. It would lead us too far from the path of our story were we to seek for this "tiny thread amid the woof;" enough for our present purpose if we slightly advert to it, by asking our reader to accompany us to the small chamber which called Albert Jekyl master, and where now, at midnight, a little table of three covers was laid for supper. Three flasks of champagne stood in a little ice-pail in one corner, and on a dumb waiter was arrayed a dessert, which, for the season, displayed every charm of rarity; a large bouquet of moss-roses and camelias ornamented the centre of the board, and shed a pleasant odour through the room. The servant — whose dress and look bespoke him a waiter from a "restaurant" in the neighbourhood — had just completed all the arrangements of the table, placing chairs around it, and heaped fresh wood upon the hearth, when a carriage drew up at the door. The merry sound of voices, and the step of feet were heard on the stairs, and the next moment a lady entered, whose dress of black lace, adorned with bouquets of blue flowers, admirably set off a

figure and complexion of Spanish mould and character. To this, a black lace veil fastened to the hair behind, and worn across the shoulders, contributed. There was a lightness and intrepidity in her step as she entered the room that suited the dark, flashing, steady glance of her full black eyes. It would have, indeed, been difficult to trace in that almost insolent air of conscious beauty, the calm, subdued, and almost sorrow-struck girl, whom we have seen as Nina in a former chapter; but, however dissimilar in appearance, they were the same one individual, and the humble *femme de chambre* of Kate Dalton was the celebrated ballet dancer of the great theatre of Barcelona.

The figure which followed was a strange contrast to that light and elegant form. He was an old short man, of excessive corpulence in body, and whose face was bloated and purple by intemperance. He was dressed in the habit of a priest, and was in reality a Canon of the Dome Cathedral. His unwieldy gate, his short and laboured respiration, increased almost to suffocation by the ascent of the stairs, and his cumbrous dress, seemed doubly absurd beside the flippant lightness of the "Ballarina." Jekyl came last, mimicking the old Canon behind his back, and putting the waiter's gravity to a severe test by the bloated expansion of his cheek and the fin-like motion of his hands as he went.

"Ecco me!" cried he out, with a deep grunt, as he sunk into a chair, and wiped the big drops from his forehead with the skirt of his gown.

"You tripped up the stairs like a gazelle, Padre," said the girl, as she arranged her hair before the glass,

and disposed the folds of her veil with all the tact of coquetry.

A thick snort, like the ejaculation a hippopotamus might have uttered, was the only reply, and Jekyl, having given a glance over the table to see all was in order, made a sign for Nina to be seated.

"Accursed be the stairs, and he that made them!" muttered the Padre. "I feel as if my limbs had been torn on the rack. I have been three times up the steps of the High Altar already to-day, and am tired as a dog."

"Here is your favourite soup, Padre," said Jekyl, as he moved the ladle through a smoking compound, whence a rich odour of tomato and garlic ascended. "This will make you young again."

"And who said I would wish to be young again," cried the Priest, angrily. "I have experience of what youth means every day in the confessional, and I promise you, age has the best of it."

"Such a ripe and ruddy age as yours, Padre!" said the girl, with affected simplicity.

"Just so, Minx," rejoined he; "such ripeness as portends falling from the tree! Better even that than to be worm-eaten on the stalk — aye! or a wasp's nest within, girl — you understand me."

"You will never be good friends for half-an-hour together," said Jekyl, as he filled their glasses with champagne, and then touching his own to each, drank off a bumper.

"These are from Savoy, these truffles, and have no flavour," said the Padre, pushing away his

plate. "Let me taste that lobster, for this is a half-fast to-day."

"They are like the Priests," said Nina, laughing; "all black without and rotten within!"

"The ball went off admirably last night," interposed Jekyl, to stop what he foresaw might prove a sharp altercation.

"Yes," said Nina, languidly. "The dresses were fresher than the wearers. It was the first time for much of the satin — the same could not be said for many of the company."

"The Balderoni looked well," said Jekyl.

"Too fat — caro mio, too fat!" replied Nina.

"And she has eight penances in the week," grunted out the Canon.

"There 's nothing like wickedness for *embonpoint*, Padre," said Nina laughing.

"Angels always are represented as chubby girls," said the Priest, whose temper seemed to improve as he ate on.

"Midchekoff, I thought, was out of temper all the evening," resumed Jekyl; "he went about with his glass in his eye, seeking for flaws in the lapis lazuli, or retouches in the pictures; and seemed terribly provoked at the goodness of the supper."

"I forgive him all, for not dancing with 'my Lady,'" said Nina. "She kept herself disengaged for the Prince, for half the night, and the only reward was, his Russian compliment of, 'What a bore is a ball, when one is past the age of dancing!'"

"Did the Noncio eat much?" asked the Padre, who seemed at once curious and envious about the dignitary.

"He played whist all night," said Jekyl, "and never changed his partner!"

"The old Marchesa Guidotti?"

"The same. You know of that, then, Padre?" asked Jekyl.

A grunt and a nod were all the response.

"What a curious chapter on 'La vie privée' of Florence, your revelations might be, Padre," said Jekyl, as if reflectingly. "What a deal of iniquity, great and small, comes to your ears every season."

"What a vast amount of it has its origin in that little scheming brain of thine, Signor Jekyli, and in the fertile wits of your fair neighbour. The unhappy marriages thou hast made — the promising unions thou hast broken — the doubts thou hast scattered here, the dark suspicions there — the rightful distrust thou hast lulled, the false confidences encouraged — Youth! youth! thou hast a terrible score to answer for."

"When I think of the long catalogue of villany you have been listening to, Padre, not only without an effort, but a wish to cheek; — when every sin recorded, has figured in your ledger, with its little price annexed; — when you have looked out upon the stormy sea of society, as a wrecker ranges his eye over an iron-bound coast in a gale, and thinks of the 'waifs' that soon will be his own; — when, as I have myself seen you, you have looked indulgently down

on petty transgressions, that must one day become big sins, and, like a skilful angler, throw the little fish back into the stream, in the confidence that when full-grown you can take them; — when you have done all these things and a thousand more, Padre, I cannot help muttering to myself, — Age, age, what a terrible score thou hast to answer for!"

"I must say," interposed Nina, "you are both very bad company, and that nothing can be in worse taste than this interchange of compliments. You are both right to amuse yourselves in this world as your faculties best point out, but each radically wrong in attributing motives to the other. What, in all that is wonderful, have we to do with motives? I'm sure *I* have no grudges to cherish, no debts of dislike to pay off, anywhere. Any *diablerie I* take part in, is for pure mischief sake. I do think it rather a hard case, that, with somewhat better features, and I know a far shrewder wit than many others, I should perform second and third-rate parts in this great comedy of life, while many without higher qualifications are 'cast for the best characters.' This little score I do try and exact, not from individuals, but the world at large. Mischief with me is the child's pleasure in deranging the chessmen when the players are most intent on the game."

"Now, as to these Onslows — for we must be practical — Padre mio," said Jekyl, "let us see what is to be done with them. As regards matrimony, the real prize has left for England — this Dalton girl may or may not be a 'hit;' some aver that she is heiress to a large estate, of which the Onslows have obtained

possession, and that they destine her for the young Guardsman. This must be inquired into. My Lady has 'excellent dispositions,' and may become anything, or everything."

"Let her come to 'the Church,' then," growled out the Canon.

"Gently, Padre, gently," said Jekyl; "you are really too covetous, and would drag the river always from your own net. We have been generous, hugely generous, to you for the last three seasons, and have made all your converts the pets of society, no matter how small and insignificant their pretensions. The vulgar, have been adopted in the best circles; the ugly, dubbed beautiful; the most tiresome of old maids, have been re-issued from the mint as new coinage. We have petted, flattered, and fawned upon those 'interesting Christians,' as the *Tablet* would call them — 'till girls began to feel that there were no partners for a polka outside the Church of Rome, and that all the "indulgences" of pleasure, like those of religion, came from the Pope.' We cannot give you the Onslows, or, at least, not yet. We have yet to marry the daughter, provide for the friend, squeeze the son."

"Profligate young villain! — Reach me the champagne, Nina; and, Nina, tell your young mistress, that it is scarcely respectful to come on foot to the mid-day mass; that the clergy of the town like to see the equipages of the rich before the doors of the cathedral, as a suitable homage to the Church. The Onslows have carriages in abundance, and their liveries are gorgeous and splendid!"

"It was her own choice," said Nina; "she is a sin-

gular girl for one that never before knew luxury of any kind."

"I hate these simple tastes," growled out the Padre; "they bespeak that obstinacy which people call a 'calm temperament.' Her own dress, too, has no indication of her rank, Nina."

"That shall be cared for, Padre."

"Why shouldn't that young soldier come along with her? Tell him that our choir is magnificent; whisper him that the beautiful Marchesa di Guardoni sits on the very bench beside Miss Dalton."

Nina nodded an assent.

"The young girl herself is lax enough about her duties, Nina; she has not been even once to confession."

"That comes of these English!" cried Nina; "they make our service a constant jest. There is always some vulgar quizzing about saint-worship, or relic reverence, or the secrets of the confessional, going on amongst them."

"Does she permit this?" asked the Priest, eagerly.

"She blushes sometimes occasionally, she smiles with a good-humour meant to deprecate these attacks, and now and then, when the sallies have been pushed too far, I have seen her in tears some hours after."

"Oh, if these heretics would but abstain from ridicule!" cried the Canon. "The least lettered amongst them can scoff, and gibe, and rail. They have their stock subjects of sarcasm, too, handed down from father to son — poor witless, little blasphemies — thefts from Voltaire, who laughed at themselves —

and much mischief do they work! Let them begin to read, however — let them commence to 'inquire,' as the phrase has it, and the game is our own."

"I think, Padre," said Jekyl, "that more of your English converts are made upon principles of pure economy — Popery, like truffles, is so cheap abroad!"

"Away with you! away with you," cried the Padre, rebukingly. "They come to us as the children seek their mother's breast. Hand me the maccaroni."

"Padre mio," broke in Jekyl, "I wish you would be Catholic enough to be less Popish. We have other plots in hand here, beside increasing the funds of the 'Holy Carmelites;' and while we are disputing about the spoil, the game may betake themselves to other hunting-grounds. These Onslows must not be suffered to go hence."

"Albert is right," interposed Nina. "When the 'Midchekoff' condescends to think himself in love with the Dalton girl — when the Guardsman has lost some thousands more than he can pay — when my Lady has offended one-half of Florence, and bullied the other — then, the city will have taken a hold upon their hearts, and you may begin your crusade when you please. Indeed, I am not sure, if the season be a dull one, I would not listen to you myself."

"As you listened once before to the Abbé D'Esmonde," said the Canon, maliciously.

The girl's cheek became deep red, and even over neck and shoulders the scarlet flush spread, while her eyes flashed a look of fiery passion.

"Do you dare — are you insolent enough to —"

Her indignation had carried her thus far, when, by a sudden change of temper, she stopped, and, clasping her hands over her face, burst into tears.

Jekyl motioned the Priest to be silent, while gently leading the other into the adjoining room, he drew the curtain, and left her alone.

"How could you say that?" said he, "you, Padre, who know that this is more than jest?"

"Spare not the sinner, neither let the stripes be light — 'Non sit levis flagella,' says Origen."

"Are the ortolans good, Padre?" asked Jekyl, while his eye glittered with an intense appreciation of the old Canon's hypocrisy.

"They are delicious! succulent, and tender," said the Priest, wiping his lips. "Francesco does them to perfection."

"You at least believe in a cook," said Jekyl, but in so low a voice as to escape the other's notice.

"She is sobbing still," said the Canon, in a whisper, and with a gesture towards the curtained doorway. "I like to hear them gulping down their sighs. It is like the glug-glug of a rich flask of 'Lagrime.'"

"But don't you pity them, Padre?" asked Jekyl, in mock earnestness.

"Never! never! First of all, they do not suffer in all these outbursts. It is but decanting their feelings into another vessel, and they love it themselves! I have had them for hours together thus in the confessional, and they go away after, so relieved in mind, and so light of heart, there's no believing it."

"But Nina," said Jekyl, seriously, "is not one of these."

"She is a woman," rejoined the Padre, "and it is only a priest can read them."

"You see human nature as the physician does, Padre, always in some aspect of suffering. Of its moods of mirth and levity you know less than we do, who pass more butterfly lives!"

"True in one sense, boy; ours are the stony paths — ours are the weary roads in life! I like that Burgundy!"

"It 's very pleasant, Padre. It is part of a case I ordered for the Onslows, but their butler shook the bottle when bringing it to table, and they begged me to get rid of it."

"These wines are not suited to Italy generally," said the Canon; "but Florence has the merit of possessing all climates within the bounds of a single day, and even Chambertin is scarcely generous enough, when the Tra-montana is blowing!"

"Well, have you become better mannered? May I venture to come in?" cried Nina, appearing at the doorway.

"'Venga pure!' 'Venga pure!'" growled out the Canon. "I forgive thee everything. Sit down beside me, and let us pledge a friendship for ever."

"There then, let this be a peace-offering," said she, taking the wreath of flowers from her own head and placing it on the brows of the Padre. "You are now like the old Bacchus in the Boboli."

"And thou like —"

"Like what? speak it out!" cried she, angrily.

"Come, come, do, I beseech you, be good friends,"

interposed Jekyl. "We have met for other objects than to exchange reproaches."

"These are but the 'iræ amantium,' boy," said the Priest; "the girl loves me with her whole heart."

"How you read my most secret thoughts!" said she, with a coquettish affectation of sincerity.

"Lectiones pravissimæ would they be!" muttered he between his teeth.

"What is that? What is he mumbling there, Albert?" cried she, hastily.

"It is a benediction, Nina," replied Jekyl; "did you not hear the Latin?"

Peace was at last restored, and what between the adroit devices of Jekyl and the goodness of his champagne, a feeling of pleasant sociality now succeeded to all the bickering, in which the festivity was prolonged to a late hour. The graver business which brought them together — the Onslows and their affairs — being discussed, they gave way to all the seductions of their exalted fancies. Jekyl, taking up his guitar, warbled out a French love song, in a little treble a bullfinch might have envied; Nina, with the aid of the Padre's beads for castinets, stepped the measure of a bolero; while the old Priest himself broke out into a long chant, in which Ovid, Petrarch, Anacreon, and his breviary, alternately figured, and under the influence of which he fell fast asleep at last, totally unconscious of the corked moustaches and eyebrows with which Nina ornamented his reverend countenance.

The sound of wheels in the silent street at last admonished them of the hour, and opening the win-

dow, Jekyl saw a brougham, belonging to Sir Stafford, just drawing up at the door.

"François is punctual," said Nina, looking at her watch; "I told him five o'clock."

"Had we not better set him down first?" said Jekyl with a gesture toward the Priest; "he does not live far away."

"With all my heart," replied she; "but you're not going to wash his face?"

"Of course I am, Nina. The jest might cost us far more than it was worth;" and so saying, Jekyl proceeded to arrange the discordered dress and dishevelled hair of the Padre, during the performance of which the old Priest recovered sufficient consciousness to permit himself to be led down stairs and deposited in the carriage.

An hour later and all was still! Jekyl slumbering peacefully on his little French bed, over which the rose-coloured mosquito curtains threw a softened half-sunset hue; a gentle smile parted his lips, as in his dreams — the dreams of a happy and contented nature — he wove pleasant fancies and devised many a future scheme.

In his own dreary little den, behind the "Duomo," the Padre also slept heavily, not a thought, not a single passing idea breaking the stagnant surface of his deep lethargy.

Nina, however, was wakeful, and had no mind for repose. Her brilliant costume carefully laid aside, she was arranging her dark hair into its habi-

tually modest braid; her very features composing themselves, as she did so, into their wonted aspect of gentleness and submission.

All the change of dress being little in comparison with the complete alteration now observable in her whole air and demeanour, she seemed a totally different being. And she was so, too: for while hypocrites to the world, we completely forget that we share in the deception ourselves!

END OF VOL. I.